Winter-Evening CONFERENCE BETWEEN Neighbours.

In Three Parts.

The Fifth Edition Corrected.

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As Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo doth the Countenance of a Man his Friend.

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THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

Courteous Reader,

I *Muſt on the behalf of the Perſons concerned in theſe Papers now in thy hands, beſpeak thy Candor in two or three Particulars following.*

Firſt, That thou wilt not ſuffer thy Curioſity to carry thee ſo far as to be very inquiſitive who they were or where they dwelt who held theſe Conferences; for beſides that the knowledge thereof would be of no uſe, there are ſeveral other reaſons why I cannot gratifie thee therein, further than by giving their true Characters, which thou wilt find ſubjoined.

Secondly, That whereas at the entrance of theſe Conferences, and per-

haps alſo here and there in other parts of them, thou may'ſt obſerve ſome ſhort touches of Mirth, thou wilt not be offended at them as ill comporting either with the gravity of the Speakers, or the ſerioufneſs of the Deſign. For if thou conſider the humour of the Age, thou wilt not find thy ſelf obliged to impute it to the levity of Sebaſtian's *temper, but to his diſcretion and wiſdom, that he doth accomodate himſelf to thoſe he would gain upon; as he that would catch Fiſh, muſt ſuit his Baits to their Guſt and Phancy.*

Thirdly, Becauſe it is not unlikely but thou wilt take notice, that the Interlocutors do now and then upon occaſion uſe complemental Attributions towards each other, and applaud one anothers Wit or Eloquence; which being now put in print, may, to a ſevere Cenſor, ſeem to ſavour of oſtentation, and look like clawing

and

and flattering one another. Therefore thou art desired to remember, that this was done only amongst themselves and in private Conversation, where such kinds of Civility are usually practised without offence or imputation.

As for the general Design of these Conferences, I make bold to tell thee, that it is apparently noble and generous, namely, to lead the way to more manly Conversation, especially amongst the better ranks of Men, to demonstrate that the strictest Vertue is consistent with the greatest Prudence and Civility; and in short, to raise the dejected and depressed Spirit of Piety in the World. The consideration hereof encouraged the Publication, and I hope will sufficiently recommend it to thy Acceptance.

Farewel.

The

The Characters of the Perſons in the two following Conferences.

Sebaſtian, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all advantages of ingaging thoſe he converſes with, in ſobriety and a ſenſe of Religion.

Philander, a Gentile and Ingenuous Perſon, but too much addicted to the lightneſſes of the Age, till reclaimed by the Converſation of *Sebaſtian.*

Biophilus, a ſceptical Perſon, who had no ſettled Belief of any thing; but eſpecially was averſe to the great Doctrines of Chriſtianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the Life to come: and therefore conſequently was much concerned for the preſent Life. Till at length awakened by the diſcreet Reaſonings of *Sebaſtian*, and the affectionate Diſcourſes of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he deſpiſed.

Eulabes, a truly prudent and holy Man, who made his Life a ſtudy of and preparation for Death, propounded as an Example for Imitation, in the ſecond Conference.

The

The Argument of the firſt Conference.

Sebaſtian *viſiting his Neighbour* Philander, *after a little time ſpent in civil Salutations, is quickly preſt by him to the too uſual Entertainment of liberal Drinking; which* Sebaſtian *at firſt modeſtly and facetiouſly declines; but afterwards more directly ſhews the folly and unmanlineſs of it. He is then invited to Gaming, which he alſo excuſing himſelf from, and giving his reaſons againſt,* Philander *complains of the difficulty of ſpending time without ſuch diverſions. Whereupon* Sebaſtian *repreſents to him ſundry Entertainments of Time both more delightful and more profitable than the forementioned; amongſt which, that of friendly and ingenuous Diſcourſe: and from thence they are led on to debate about Religious Conference; the Uſefulneſs, Eaſineſs, Prudence and Gentility of which are largely demonſtrated: Of which* Philander *being convinced, inquires the way of entring into it, of continuing and managing of it. In which being inſtructed by* Sebaſtian, *he reſolves to put it in practice.*

The

The Argument of the ſecond Conference.

In the former Conference Sebaſtian *having convinced* Philander *of the great importance of Religion, and the wiſdom of making it as well the ſubject of ſocial Communication as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpoſe this ſecond time to conferr about it. But* Biophilus, *a ſceptical Perſon, being in their Company, he at firſt diverts them from their deſign by other Diſcourſe; till after awhile, under the diſguiſe of News, he is wheedled into this ſubject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the proof of thoſe Principles which they would have ſuppoſed. Upon this occaſion the foundations of Religion are ſearched into, and particularly that great Point concerning* A Judgment to come, *is ſubſtantially proved: Which being done, and* Biophilus *thereby rendered ſomewhat more inclinable to be ſerious, they then purſue their firſt intentions, and diſcourſe warmly and ſenſibly of another World, and of the neceſſary preparations for it, ſo long till they not only inflame their own hearts with Devotion, but ſtrike ſome ſparks of it into* Biophilus *alſo.*

A Winter-Evening CONFERENCE AT *PHILANDER's* Houſe.

PART I.

Sebaſtian. A Good Evening to you, good *Philander*, I am glad to find you in Health, and I hope all your Family is ſo too.

Philander. I humbly thank you, Sir, we are all well (God be praiſed) and the better to ſee you here; for I hope you come with intentions to give us the Diverſion of your good Company this long Evening.

Sebaſt. If that will do you any pleaſure, I am at your Service. For, to deal plainly, I came with the reſolution to ſpend an hour or two with you; provided, it be not unſeaſonable for your Occaſions, nor intrench upon any buſineſs of your Family.

Phil. Buſineſs, Sir! at this time of the Year we are even weary with reſt, and tired with having nothing to do.

Sebaſt. It is a time of leiſure, I confeſs; the Earth reſts, and ſo do we; yet, I thank God, my time never lies upon my hands, for I can alway find ſomething or other to employ my ſelf in. When the Fields lie dead and admit of no Huſbandry, I then can cultivate the little Garden of my own Soul; and when there is no Recreation abroad, I have a Company of honeſt old Fellows in Leathern Coats, which find me Divertiſement at home.

Phil. I know the Company you mean, though I confeſs I have not much acquaintance with them; but do you not find it a melancholy thing to converſe with the dead?

Sebaſt. Why ſhould you ſay they are dead? no, they are immortal, they cannot die, they are all Soul, Reaſon without Paſſion, and Eloquence without Noiſe or Clamour. Indeed they do not eat and drink, by which only Argument ſome Men now-a-days prove themſelves to be alive, as *Cyrus* proved the Divinity of his God *Bel.* But theſe are kept without coſt, and yet retain the ſame Countenance and Humour, and are always chearful and diverting. Beſides, they have this peculiar Quality, that a Man may have their Company, or lay them aſide at pleaſure, without Offence. Notwithſtanding, I muſt needs acknowledge, I preferr the Company of a good Neighbour before them; and particularly am well ſatisfied that I cannot ſpend this Evening better than in your Converſation, and I am confident I ſhall ſleep well at night, if, firſt ſome friendly Offices paſs between us.

Phil.

Phil. You doubly oblige me, good *Sebaſtian*, firſt in your great condeſcenſion to make me this kind viſit, and then in forſaking ſo good Company for mine.

Sebaſt. Your great Courteſie, *Philander*, interprets that to be an Obligation upon your ſelf, which is but Self-love in me: for truly I am ſenſible that ſo great a part of the comfort of Life depends upon a man's good Correſpondence with thoſe that are near about him, that I think I cannot love my ſelf unleſs I love my Neighbour alſo. And now, Sir, if you pleaſe, let us upon this occaſion improve our Neighbourhood to a more intimate Friendſhip, ſo that you and I who have hitherto lived peaceably and inoffenſively by each other, may henceforth become mutually uſeful and ſerviceable to one another.

Phil. O good *Sebaſtian*, you talk of Self-love, but I ſhall be ſo far from it, that I muſt hate my ſelf, and that deſervedly too, if I lay not hold of ſo advantagious a propoſal.

Sebaſt. Dear Neighbour, no Complements, I beſeech you, that will ſpoil our deſign, and continue us Strangers to each other.

Phil. If I were uſed to complement, yet I ſhould be aſhamed to make ſo ſuperficial a return to an overture of ſo much kindneſs and reality; but I am plain and hearty, and heartily I imbrace both your ſelf and your motion.

Maid, make us a good Fire.

Come, Sir, what will you drink?

Sebaſt. All in good time, Sir.

Phil. Nay, never in better time; now is the ſeaſon of drinking; we muſt imitate the Plants, and now ſuck in ſap to ſerve us all the Year after: if you will flouriſh in the Spring, you

muſt take in good Juices in the Winter.

Sebaſt. You ſeem, *Philander*, to dream of a dry Summer, however I'll pledge you, for I am ſure the Winter is Cold.

Phil. Well, Sir, here is that will abate the edge of the Weather, be it as ſharp as it can. This drink will make the Evenings warm, and the Nights ſhort in ſpight of the Seaſon.

Sebaſt. That would be a pleaſant Experiment, but have you tryed it?

Phil. Yes, very often, *probatum eſt*; but then you muſt take the full doſe. Come, fear it not, this will breed good Bloud, cure Melancholy, and is the only Cement of good Neighbourhood.

The tipling Humour of the Age expoſed.

Sebaſt. Why then I hope our Friendſhip will be laſting, for the Cement (as you call it) is ſtrong.

Phil. You are pleaſant, *Sebaſtian:* but now that you and I are together; and under the Roſe too (as they ſay) why ſhould not we drink ſomewhat briskly? we ſhall know one another and love one another the better ever after. For, let me tell you, this will open our Hearts, and turn our very inſides outward.

Sebaſt. That Trick, *Philander*, I confeſs I have ſeen plaid, but I thought it a very unſeemly one.

Phil. I doubt you miſtake me, I mean onely that a liberal Glaſs will take off all reſervedneſs in our Converſation.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, good Neighbour, but with your Pardon, I muſt needs tell you, that I have never been able to obſerve the Glaſs you ſpeak of, to be ſo exact a mirrour of Minds, but

but as often to disfigure and disguise Men, as truly to represent them. Have you not found some Men, who upon an infusion in strong Liquor, have seemed for the present to be totally dissolved into Kindness and good Nature; and yet as soon as ever the drink is squeezed out of these Sponges, they become again as dry, as hard, and as rough as a Pumice, and as intractable as ever. Others you shall observe to hector and swagger in their drink, as if they were of the highest Mettle and most redoubted Courage, whose Spirits nevertheless evaporating with their Wine, they prove as tame errand Cowards as any are in Nature. Perhaps also you may have taken notice of a maudlin kind of Soakers, who commonly relent when they are well moistned, as if they shrunk in the wetting; and will at such times seem to be very Devout and Religious, and yet for all this they continue as Sottish as ever, as impenitent as a weeping Wall, and as insensible as the groaning Plank. Contrariwise there are some men, who in the general Habit of their Lives, appear to be very discreet and ingenuous persons; yet if, contrary to their Custom, they have the misfortune to be surprized with drink, they become as dull as Dormice, as flat and insipid as Pompions.

I cannot think therefore that this Drink Ordeal is so infallible a test of Mens Tempers as you imagine; or if it were, yet there is no need of it between you and me: we can candidly and sincerely lay open our Bosoms to each other, without having a Confession of our Sentiments forced from us, by this new fashioned Dutch Torture.

Phil. I must needs confess, *Sebastian*, that you

raillé at Tipling with ſo good a Grace, that I cannot be ſorry I gave you the occaſion: but ſtill I doubt you miſtake me, I am not for ſcandalous and debauched Drinking, but in a civil way between Friends, to make our Spirits light, and our Hearts chearful.

Sebaſt. And, good *Philander*, do not miſtake me, I am not of that moroſe Humour to condemn all Chearfulneſs; neither do I take upon me to preſcribe to every Man his juſt Doſe, or think a Man muſt divide by an Hair, or be intemperate. I account good Wine as neceſſary as good Meat, and in ſome Caſes more neceſſary: Neither do I doubt but a Man may make uſe of it with a good deal of prudent Liberty; for I do not look upon the Fruit of the Vine, as the forbidden Fruit, or think ſo hardly of God Almighty, as if he gave us ſo good a Creature only to tempt and inſnare us. Yet on the other ſide, I am perſwaded, that a Man may love his Houſe, though he doth not ride upon the ridge of it; and can by no means be of their Opinion, who fanſie there is no Freedom but in a Debauch, no Sincerity without a Surfeit, or no Chearfulneſs whilſt Men are in their right Wits. And I look upon the very conceit of this as reproachful both to God and Man, but the practice of it I am ſure is the bane of all manly Converſation.

Phil. I have known ſome Men oppoſe one Vice with another as bad or worſe; and who whilſt they railed at drinking, have, in effect, only made Apologies for ill Nature: but you, *Sebaſtian*, though you ſpeak ſome very ſevere Things, yet attemper them with ſo much Humanity, that I feel a kind of Pleaſure, even then when you touch me to the quick; therefore you

that

that have ſo much good Nature your ſelf, will, I preſume, make ſome allowances to Complaiſance in others.

Sebaſt. Far be it from me to undervalue good Nature, which I have in ſo great eſteem, that I ſcarcely think any thing is good without it; It is the very air of a good Mind, the ſign of a large and generous Soul, and the peculiar Soil on which Vertue proſpers. And as for that genuine Fruit of it Complaiſance, I take it (if it be rightly underſtood) to be that which above all things renders a Man both amiable and uſeful in the World, and which as well ſweetens as facilitates Converſation; but the miſchief is (as it generally happens to all excellent things) there is a Counterfeit which (aſſuming the name) paſſes current for it in the World, by which Men become impotent and incapable of withſtanding any Importunities, be they never ſo unreaſonable, or reſiſting any Temptations be they never ſo dangerous; but as if they were crippled in their Powers, or crazed in their Minds, are wholly governed by Example, and ſneakingly conform themſelves to other Mens Humours and Vices; and, in a word, become every Man's Fool that hath the confidence to impoſe upon them. Now this is ſo far from that lovely maſculine Temper of true Complaiſance, that it is indeed no better than a childiſh Baſhfulneſs, a feeble Puſillanimity, and ſilly ſoftneſs of Mind, which makes a Man firſt the Slave and Property, and then at laſt the Scorn of his Company. Wherefore it is the part of a Good-natured Man, neither ſo rigidly to inſiſt upon the punctilio's of his Liberty or Property, as to refuſe a Glaſs re-

Of good Nature and Complaiſance.

commended to him by civility; nor yet on the other ſide, to be either Hectored or Wheedled out of his Chriſtian Name (as we ſay) and Sheepiſhly ſubmit himſelf to be taxed in his Drink, or other indifferent Things at other Mens Pleaſure. And if he ſhall fall into the Company of thoſe, who ſhall aſſume to themſelves ſuch an Arbitrary Power, as to aſſeſs him at their own rate, and preſcribe their meaſures to him; I do not doubt but that with a *ſalvo* both to good Nature and Civility, he may and ought ſo far to aſſert his own Dominion over himſelf, as with a generous diſdain to reject the Impoſition, and look upon the Impoſers as equally Tyrannical, and impertinent with thoſe who would preſcribe to me to eat their proportions of Meat, or to wear my Clothes juſt of their ſize.

Phil. O Sir, your Diſcourſe is brave and wiſe and virtuous, but one thing is wanting to make me your Proſelyte; which is that I doubt it is not practicable; you cannot certainly but be ſenſible how difficult a thing it is for Modeſty and good Nature to oppoſe the prevailing Humour of the Age, which in plain truth is ſuch, that now-a-days a Man looks very odly that keeps any ſtrict meaſures of drinking.

Sebaſt. I am afraid it is too true which you ſay; and though I have no mind to reproach, or much leſs quarrel with the Age we live in; yet I confeſs to you, it is a matter of regret and diſdain to me to obſerve Skill in good Liquors ambitiouſly pretended to, as if it were a very conſiderable Point of Knowledge; and good Drinking looked upon as ſo important an Affair of humane Life, that that time ſeems to be loſt, in which the Glaſs goes not round, and the Cup

and

and the Bottle ſeem to be the Hour-glaſs or the only meaſure of Time. And this I the more wonder at, becauſe the Air, the Climate, the Conſtitutions of Mens Bodies are not changed, and the Laws of Temperance are the ſame they were wont to be: and beſides all this, I do ingenuouſly acknowledge the Age to be extraordinarily polite and ingenuous; I would therefore very fain know, but have not hitherto been able to ſatisfie my ſelf, from what cauſes this change of Mens Manners in this particular hath ariſen, and what hath brought this tipling Humour into Faſhion.

Apologies for Tipling baffled.

Phil. You need not ask my Opinion, for you have anſwered your ſelf; it is a Faſhion, and that you know is changeable without obſervable cauſes; but becauſe, perhaps you think my unhappy Experience may inable me to ſay ſomething in the Caſe, I will tell you: Faſhions, you know, are commonly taken up for diſtinction-ſake; for Men do not love to appear in the Garb of thoſe whom they hate or deſpiſe. Now there are a melancholy ſort of People amongſt us, that are wonderfully preciſe in their way; Men of a kind of Leſſian Conſcience, that pretend to do all things by meaſure, and indeed weigh every thing by ſcruples, and conſequently (whatever they are towards themſelves) are very ſevere in their cenſures of other Men; inſomuch, that whatſoever is not juſt after their Mode and Humour, eſpecially if it look never ſo little aiery and light, they preſently damn it as flat immorality and debauchery. Theſe Men (however ſome of them may be well-meaning and pitiable)

pitiable) you will eaſily grant muſt needs be very troubleſome in the World. But then there is another ſort of Men, who being of a more ſanguine and chearful Temper, are not ſo ſtrait-laced in their Principles, and conſequently are apt to indulge themſelves a far greater Liberty of Converſation; and in deteſtation of the former, whom they obſerve to be often abſurd and unreaſonable, but always hide-bound and phantaſtical, do (as it is too uſual in ſuch caſes) run out upon ſome extremity on the other ſide; and ſo, in ſhort, it ſeems to me that unneceſſary ſcrupuloſity hath given occaſion and countenance to its direct contrary; and thus that Tipling humour, as you call it, hath become the prevailing faſhion.

Sebaſt. In truth, *Philander*, the account you have given is ingenious, and not improbable: But, Lord, what a miſery is it that Men muſt always be upon extreams! is there no middle? cannot Men be merry and wiſe too? is there any neceſſity that every Man muſt be intoxicated one way or other? if one ſort be ſilly, muſt the other be mad? or if they be mad, muſt theſe be drunk? For my part, I cannot tell whether to call this Diſtinction (as you do) or Imitation, or Infection, or Faſcination, or what you will, but ſure I am, they are both very vitious and abſurd.

Phil. Nay, *Sebaſtian*, I will not take upon me altogether to juſtifie the Practice of the one more than the other; but now I am in, I will (with your leave) give you notice of another thing, that is thought to have a conſiderable ſtroke in this buſineſs, and may in ſome meaſure mitigate your cenſure of the Good-Fellows.

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It is the Obſervation of wiſe Men, that generally the Cuſtoms of People were taken up at firſt upon the Account of ſome natural neceſſity or defect (as we ſee generally Art ſupplies and perfects Nature.) Now you know we live in a cold Climate, and conſequently muſt needs have dull flegmatick Bodies, the influence of which upon our Minds is eaſily diſcernable (amongſt other inſtances) by that extreme Modeſty and Baſhfulneſs, which is almoſt equally common to us all, and peculiar to all that are of this Country, and which ordinarily Tongue-ties us in all good Company, until Wine have warmed us, and diſſolved that ligament; ſo that it ſhould ſeem that Drinking is not altogether blame-worthy, as being more neceſſary to us than to moſt other People, if it were but to make us ſprightly and converſable: for as on the one ſide, you cannot expect that all Men ſhould be able to converſe together like a company of dry Philoſophers; ſo on the other, I know you would not have Engliſhmen, when they are in Company, hold a ſilent Quakerly Meeting.

Sebaſt. Now, *Philander*, you have mended the matter finely; to avoid my cenſure of the Good-Fellows (as you call them) you have cenſured the whole Nation as a Generation of dull Sotts: and repreſented your Countrymen as a ſort of People newly faſhioned out of Clay, and juſt able to ſtand upright, but into whom God Almighty hath put no Soul at all, but left that to be extracted out of the Spirit of Wine, by which means, when we have attained it (and not till then, it ſeems) we may become like other Folks. But in the mean time, I wonder what became of all our ſober Anceſtors, and particularly

larly of the dry Race of Queen *Elizabeth*-men (as they are called.) I cannot find but they had as much Soul and Spirit as the preſent Generation (however they came by it) though they never made Alembicks of themſelves. But in earneſt, *Philander*, I will confeſs ingenuouſly to you, that as for ſuch a dull ſort of earthly Men as you ſpeak of, I ſhould not be much offended with them, if they now and then got a little Froth into their Heads, to ſupply their defect of Brains; and if upon that occaſion, they grew ſomewhat conceited and impertinent, the matter were not much, though the Metamorphoſis might ſeem ſtrange, for a dull Aſs to become an Ape or a Monkey: But then for the ſame reaſon, the finer Wits (and ſurely ſome ſuch there be) ſhould let it alone; for that rational and ingenuous Men ſhould by this Cup of *Circe*, the magical Power of Wine, be transformed into ſuch kind of Animals, methinks it is a thouſand pities. But why do you ſmile, *Philander?*

Phil. Even at my ſelf, good *Sebaſtian*, or at leaſt at that Picture you have drawn for me; it would look a little ambitiouſly, if I ſhould compare my ſelf to the Land of *Egypt*, which, they ſay, was fruitful in proportion to its being overflown; but in plain truth, I am ſuch a ſpot of Earth, as will bear nothing unleſs it be well watered; and to countenance my ſelf in this condition, though I cannot pretend to Learning, yet I remember I have heard that the graveſt Philoſophers did uſe to water their Plants (as we ſay) and ſometimes philoſophized over a Glaſs of Wine.

Sebaſt. And why not over a Glaſs of Wine, as well as by a Fire-ſide? provided a Man take care,

care, that as by the one he does not burn his Shins, ſo by the other he doth not over heat his Head; or to follow your Metaphor, provided a man only water the Soil, and do not drown it. You know it is onely Extreams that I find fault with, when Men will be always ſipping and dabling, as if their Bodies were nothing but Pipes made on purpoſe to tranſmit Liquors through; or as if they had their Life and Soul transfus'd into them from the Hogſhead.

Phil. Well, Sir, I perceive I am likely to get nothing by my fine figure; I will therefore ſay no more of my ſelf; but I have heard ſome others ſay, they have always found their reaſon to be ſtrongeſt, when their Spirits were moſt exalted.

Sebaſt. But ſure they did not mean that their Reaſon was ſtrongeſt, when the Wine was too ſtrong for them? if they did, then either their Reaſon was very ſmall at the beſt, and nothing ſo ſtrong as their Drink, or elſe we are quite miſtaken in the names of things; and ſo in plain Engliſh, Drunkenneſs is Sobriety, and Sobriety Drunkenneſs: For who can imagine that that which clouds the Head, ſhould enlighten the Mind; and that which wildly agitates the Spirits, ſhould ſtrengthen the Underſtanding; or that a coherent thred of Diſcourſe, ſhould be ſpun by a ſhattered virtiginous brain; it is poſſible ſome odd Crotchets and Whimſeys may at ſuch times be raiſed together with the Fumes; or it is not unlikely, but that a man may then ſeem wondrous wiſe in his own Eyes, when he ſhall appear very ſilly and ridiculous to all others that are not in the ſame condition with himſelf; but to go about to make any thing

better

better of it, is a kind of liquid Enthuſiaſm. And that this is no wild conjecture or uncharitable Opinion of mine, I appeal to this Experiment; tell me, good *Philander*, what is the Reaſon that Men in thoſe Jollities (we ſpeak of) cannot endure the company of thoſe that will not take their ſhare with them, but are moſt pleaſed with ſuch as will rather exceed their meaſure, and take off their Cups roundly; is it think you out of deſire that ſuch Men ſhould be wiſer than themſelves, or the quite contrary? or what is the Reaſon that Men of this Practice are very ſhy of thoſe Perſons that will remember and repeat afterwards the Paſſages in thoſe merry Aſſignations? I make no doubt, but when you have conſidered the Caſe, you will find this to lie at the bottom, namely, that even ſuch Perſons are ſenſible that ſeveral things paſs amongſt them at ſuch times for Wit and good Humour, which when they hear of again, and reflect upon in their ſober Intervals, they are heartily aſhamed of, as apiſh and ridiculous Fooleries.

But now, if (after all) I ſhould grant you (which I do not unwillingly) that Men well whetted with Wine (as they love to ſpeak) are very ſharp and piquant, very jocoſe and ready at a repertée, or ſuch like; yet beſides that this edge is ſo thin and Razor-like, that it will ſerve to no manly purpoſes; yet it is alſo very dangerous, ſince at that time a wiſe Man hath it not in keeping.

Phil. Well, I perceive hitherto the edge of my Arguments turns at the force of your Replies; therefore I had beſt contend no longer with you on that point, whether Wine raiſes Mens parts

or

or no: But one thing I have yet to ſay, which I am ſure you muſt and will grant me, *viz.* that it ſuppreſſes Cares and Melancholy, and makes a Man forget his Sorrows, (that great Diſeaſe of humane Life.) and this I ſuppoſe ſufficiently commends the liberal uſe of it.

Sebaſt. That which you now ſay is undeniably true; and no queſtion, for this very end was the juice of the Grape principally ordained by the great Creator of the World; but yet I know not how it comes to paſs, that this remedy is ſeldomeſt made uſe of, by thoſe to whom it was peculiarly preſcribed; I mean, the melancholy and dejected have ordinarily the leaſt ſhare of it; but it is very commonly taken by the proſperous, the ſanguine and debonair, and ſuch as have leaſt need of it; and theſe frequently take it in ſuch large proportions, that it makes them not only forget their Sorrows (if they had any) but themſelves and their buſineſs too. So that upon the whole matter, I ſee no tolerable account can be given of the way of drinking now in faſhion; for it appears to have been taken up upon no neceſſity; it is recommended by no real advantage, either to the Body or Mind, and therefore muſt owe its riſe to no better cauſes than dulneſs or idleneſs, a ſilly obſequiouſneſs to other Mens Humours, or Epicuriſm and Wantonneſs of our own Inclination. And for the Habit of it, it is no better than a lewd Artifice to avoid thinking, a way for a Man to get ſhut of himſelf and of all ſober Conſiderations.

The real cauſes of Tipling intimated, and the miſchiefs of it exaggerated.

It fills Men with more Spirits than it leaves them able to Govern; from whence they become great

great Talkers, proud Boaſters, capricious, inſolent and quarrelſome. For it ſo much dilates and rarifies the Spirits, that they cannot bear up a weighty thought; and while ſuch as thoſe are ſunk and drowned, nothing but the mere froth and folly of Mens Hearts bubbles up in their Converſation. And this inſenſibly growing upon men, by degrees introduces an habitual vanity and impertinence, below the gravity and dignity of humane Nature; and by means of which, ſuch men become fit only for Toys and Trifles, for apiſh Tricks and buffoonly Diſcourſe; which in concluſion, do ſo far degrade a man below his quality, that he becomes not only a ſhame to himſelf and his Family, but the contempt of his very Servants and Dependents.

And touching this laſt, have you not ſometime obſerved, what dry Bobs, and ſarcaſtical Jeers the moſt underling Fellows will now and then beſtow upon their Betters, when they have found them faultering in this kind: *Was not Maſter ſuch a one cruelly cut laſt night?* ſays one. *How like a drowned Rat was Maſter ſuch a one?* ſays another. *How wiſely our Maſter looks when he hath got his doſe?* ſaith a third.

Shall I need after all this, to repreſent the Sin committed againſt God Almighty, by this vain Cuſtom, in the breach of his Laws, deforming his Image, and quenching his Spirit; or the injury it doth to humane Society, in the riotous and profuſe expence of ſo comfortable a Cordial and Support of humane Life; or, ſhall I but reckon up the miſchiefs a man hereby incurrs to his own perſon, the danger of his Health, the damage to his Fortunes, the —

Phil. O, no more, no more, good *Sebaſtian*, I am

I am yours, you have ſilenced, you have vanquiſhed me; I am not able to reſiſt the evidence of truth in your Diſcourſe, you have quite marr'd a good Fellow, and ſpoil'd my Drinking.

But how then ſhall I treat you? Come, you are for ſerious Things, what ſay you to a Game at Tables? Methinks that is both a grave and a pleaſant entertainment of the time.

Sebaſt. Truly, Sir, I am ſo unskilful at that and moſt other Games, that I ſhould rather give you trouble than diverſion at it. But what need you be ſolicitous for my Entertainment; It is your Company only which I deſire. And methinks it looks as if Friends were weary one of the other, when they fall to Gaming.

Of Gaming, and particularly of Chance Games.

Phil. But I ſhould think a Man of your temper might have a fancy for this Game, as upon other reſpects, ſo eſpecally becauſe it ſeems to be a pretty Emblem of the World.

Sebaſt. As how, I pray you, Sir?

Phil. Why, in the firſt place, the caſual agitation of the Dice in the Box, which unaccountably produceth ſuch or ſuch a Lott, ſeems to me to repreſent the Diſpoſal of that Inviſible Hand which orders the Fortunes of Men. And then the dexterous management of that Lott or Caſt by the Gameſter plainly reſembles the uſe and efficacy of humane prudence and induſtry in the Conduct of a Man's own Fortunes.

Sebaſt. I perceive, *Philander*, that you play like a Philoſopher as well as a Gameſter; but in my opinion you have forgotten the main re-

ſemblance of all, which is, That the Clatter and Noiſe in toſſing and tumbling the Dice and Table-men up and down, backward and forward, lively deſcribes the hurry and tumult of this World, where one Man goes up, and another tumbles down; one is dignified and preferred, another is degraded; that Man reigns and triumphs, this Man frets and vexes; the one laughs, the other repines; and all the reſt tug and ſcuffle to make their advantage of one another. Let this, if you pleaſe, be added to the Moral of your Game. But when all is done, I muſt tell you, for my part, I am not ſo much taken with the Original, as to be fond of the Type or Effigies; I mean, I am not ſo in love with the World, as to take any great delight in ſeeing it brought upon the Stage, and acted over again: But had much rather retreat from it, when I can, and give my ſelf the contentment of repoſe, and quiet thoughts.

Phil. However, I hope you are not offended at my mention of that Game. Do you think it unlawful to uſe ſuch Diverſion?

Sebaſt. No, Dear *Phil.* I am not of that auſtere Humour to forbid delightful Exerciſes; for I am ſenſible, that whilſt Men dwell in Bodies, it is fit they not only keep them up in neceſſary reparation by meat and drink, but alſo make them as lightſome and cheerful as they can, otherwiſe the Mind will have but an uncomfortable Tenancy. The Animal Life, I ſay, muſt be conſidered as well as the Intellectual, and our Spirits have need to be relaxed ſometimes, leſt the keeping them continually intent weaken and infeeble them ſo, that they cannot ſerve us in greater purpoſes; I would therefore as

ſoon

ſoon univerſally forbid all Phyſick, as all kind of Exerciſe and Diverſion, and indeed rather of the two, for I think the latter may in a great meaſure ſave the trouble of the former, but that will doe little or no good without this.

Neither do I think even thoſe Games of Chance abſolutely unlawful; I have ſometimes made uſe of this in particular which you mention, or the like to it, upon ſome occaſions: As for inſtance, when I took Phyſick, and could neither be allowed to walk abroad, nor to be ſerious and thoughful within doors; I have ſupplied both for that time, with a Game at Tables. Or, it may be, when I have happened to be engaged in ſome kind of Company, I have play'd, not ſo much to divert my ſelf with the Game, as to divert the Company from ſomething that was worſe. But to deal freely with you: Though I do not altogether condemn, yet I cannot very much commend theſe kind of Sports; for indeed I ſcarce think them Sports, they are rather a Counterfeit kind of Buſineſs, and wearies ones head as much as real ſtudy and buſineſs of importance. So that in the uſe of them a Man only puts a cheat upon himſelf and tickles himſelf to death; for by applying himſelf for delight to theſe buſie and thoughtful Games, he becomes like a Candle lighted at both ends, and muſt needs be quickly waſted away between jeſt and earneſt, whenas both his Cares and his Delights prey upon him.

Beſides, I obſerve, that Diverſions of this nature having ſo much of Chance and Surprize in them, do generally too much raiſe the paſſions of Men, which it were fitter by all Arts and Endeavours to charm down and ſuppreſs. For, to

ſay nothing of the uſual accidents of common Gaming-Houſes, which (as I have heard from thoſe that knew too well) are the moſt lively Pictures of Hell upon Earth, and where it is ordinary for Men to rave, ſwear, curſe and blaſpheme, as if the Devil was indeed amongſt them, or the Men were transformed into Infernal Spirits; I have ſeen ſad Examples of Extravagance in the more modeſt and private, but over-eager purſuits of theſe Recreations: inſomuch that ſometimes a well-tempered perſon hath quite loſt all command of himſelf at them. So that you might ſee his Eyes fiery, his Colour inflamed, his Hands to tremble, his Breath to be ſhort, his Accents of Speech fierce and violent; by all which and abundance more ill-favoured Symptoms, you might conclude his Heart to be hot, and his Thoughts ſolicitous, and indeed the whole Man, Body and Soul, to be in an Agony. Now will you call this a Recreation, or a Rack and Torture rather? A Rack certainly; which makes a Man betray thoſe Follies which every wiſe Man ſeeks to conceal, and heightens thoſe Paſſions which every good Man endeavours to ſubdue.

And, which is yet worſe (as I was ſaying) this courſe looks like the accuſtoming of the Beaſt to be rampant, and to run without the Rein. For by indulging our Paſſions in jeſt we get an habit of them in earneſt, and accordingly ſhall find our ſelves to be enclined to be wrathful, peeviſh and clamorous, when we apply our ſelves to buſineſs, or more grave converſation.

To all which add, That Gaming (and eſpecially at ſuch Games as we are ſpeaking of) doth inſenſibly ſteal away too much of our time from

from better buſineſs, and tempts us to be Prodigals and Bankrupts of that which no good Fortune can ever redeem or repair. And this is ſo notoriouſly true, that there is hardly any Man who ſets himſelf down to theſe Paſtimes (as they are called) that can break off and recall himſelf when he deſigned ſo to doe. Foraſmuch as either by the too great intention of his Mind, he forgets himſelf; or the anger ſtirred up by his misfortunes, and the indignation to go off baffled, ſuffers him not to think of any thing but revenge, and reparation of his Loſſes, or the hopes he is fed withall trolls him on, or ſome witchery or other tranſports him ſo beſides his firſt reſolutious, that Buſineſs, Health, Family, Friends, and even the Worſhip of God it ſelf, are all ſuperſeded and neglected for the ſake of this paltry Game.

All which conſidered, I am really afraid there is more of the Devil in it than we are ordinarily aware of, and that it is a temptation of his to engage us in that, where he that wins moſt is ſure to loſe that which is infinitely of more value. Therefore upon the whole matter I think it much ſafer to keep out of the Lifts than to engage; where, beſides the greatneſs of the ſtake, a Man cannot bring himſelf off again without ſo great difficulty.

Pardon me, dear *Philander*, if my zeal or indignation (or what you will call it) hath tranſported me in this particular; ſure I am I have no intention to reproach your practice, nor to affront you for your motioning this ſport to me, but ſpeak out of hearty good-will, and to give you caution.

Phil. O *Sebaſtian!* I love you dearly, and

thank you heartily for the freedom you have uſed with me. We good-natur'd Men (as the World flatters us, and we love to be ſtyled) conſidering little or nothing our ſelves, and having ſeldom the Happineſs of diſcreet and faithful Friends that will have ſo much concern for us as to admoniſh us of our imprudences and our dangers, as if we were mere Machines, move juſt as other Men move and prompt us, and ſo Drink, Play, and do a thouſand Follies for Company ſake, and under the continuance of one anothers Example: God forgive me, I have too often been an inſtance of that which you now intimated: I therefore again and again thank you for your advice, and hope I ſhall remember as long as I live what you have ſaid on this occaſion.

But that you may work a perfect Cure upon me, I will be ſo true to my ſelf as to acquaint you faithfully with what I apprehend to be the Cauſe of this Epidemical Diſtemper. I find the common and moſt irreſiſtible Temptation both to Drinking and Gaming is, the unskilfulneſs of ſuch Men as my ſelf to employ our time without ſuch kind of Diverſions, eſpecially at this Seaſon of the year, when the dark and long Evenings, foul Ways and ſharp Weather, drive us into Clubs and Combinations. If therefore you will deal freely and friendly with me herein, and by your prudence help me over this difficulty, you will exceedingly oblige me, and doe an act worthy of your ſelf, and of that kindneſs which brought you hither.

Want of buſineſs the occaſion of Drinking and Gaming.

Sebaſt. There is nothing, Dear *Phil.* within my

my power which you may not command me in. Nor is there any thing wherein I had rather ſerve you (if I could) than in a buſineſs of this nature. But all I can doe, and as I think all that is needfull in this Caſe is, to deſire you to conſider on it again, and then I hope you will find the difficulty not ſo inſuperable as you imagine. It is very true, Ideleneſs is more painful than hard Labour, and nothing is more wearisome than having nothing to doe: Beſides, as a rich Soil will be ſure to bring forth Weeds, if it be not ſowed with more profitable Seed; ſo the active Spirits in Man will be ſure to prompt him to evil, if they be not employed in doing good. For the Mind can no more bear a perfect ceſſation and intermiſſion, than the World a *Vacuum.*

But this difficulty which you repreſent, generally preſſes young Men only: Theſe indeed having more Sail than Balaſt; I mean, having a mighty vigour and abundance of Spirits, but not their Minds furniſhed with a ſufficient ſtock of Knowledge and Experience to govern and employ thoſe active Spirits upon: no wonder if ſuch perſons, rather than doe juſt nothing, and in defect of real Buſineſs, do greedily catch at thoſe ſhadows and remſemblances of it, (as I remember you ingeniouſly called Drinking and Gaming.) Beſides, theſe ſort of Perſons ſeeming to themſelves to have a great deal of time before them, are eaſily drawn to ſpend it the more laviſhly, as out of an unmeaſurable Store. But what is all this to Men that are entred into real buſineſs, and have concerns under their hand, and the luxuriancy of whoſe Spirits is taken off by Cares and Experience, and eſpecially who

cannot (without unpardonable ſtupidity) but be ſenſible how daily the time and Age of Man wears away. Now, I ſay, why time ſhould be ſo burthenſome to ſuch as theſe, or what ſhould betray them to ſuch infrugal Expences of it, I profeſs, for my part, I can give no account, without making ſevere reflections on their diſcretion.

Phil. Aſſign what cauſes of it you can, or make what reflections upon it you pleaſe, however the matter of fact is certainly true in the general, That a Gentleman's time is his burthen, (whether he be young or old) and the want of Employment for it, his great temptation to ſeveral Extravagances.

Sebaſt. I muſt believe it to be as you ſay, becauſe you know the World better than I do, and I am confident you will not miſreport it. But really, *Phil.* it is very ſtrange it ſhould be ſo; and I am ſure cannot be verified without very ingrateful returns to the Divine Bounty, which hath made ſo liberal and ample proviſions for the delight and contentment of ſuch perſons far above the rate of others. It is true, they have leſs bodily labour, and no drudgery, to exhauſt their Time and Spirits upon (and that methinks ſhould be no grievance) but then the prudent management of a plentiful Fortune, (if things be rightly conſidered) doth not take up much leſs time than the poor Man's labour for neceſſities of Life. For what with ſecuring the Patrimony and Huſbanding the Revenue, what with letting and ſetting his Lands, and building and repairing his Houſes, what with planting Walks, and beautifying

A Gentleman's Life as buſie as other Mens.

fying his Gardens, what with accommodating himſelf according to his Quality, and hoſpitably treating his Friends and Neighbours according to theirs; and, to ſay no more, what with keeping Accounts of all this, and governing a numerous and well-fed Family, I am of opinion, that (all this taken together) the Gentleman hath indeed the more pleaſant, but a no leſs buſie Employment of his time than other Men: Inſomuch that I cannot but ſuſpect that he muſt be deficient in ſome principal Branch of good Husbandry, and defrauds his buſineſs that ſurfeits on leiſure.

Moreover, as Divine bounty hath exempted ſuch Men as we ſpeak of from the common ſweat and anxiety of Life, by thoſe large Patrimonies his Providence and the care of Parents hath provided to their hands; ſo the ſame Divine Majeſty hath thereby obliged them, and it is accordingly expected from them by the World, that they be more publickly ſerviceable to their Prince and Countrey, in Magiſtracy, in making Peace, and ſeveral ways aſſiſting Government, and promoting the ends of humane Society: upon which account, as it is very unjuſt that others ſhould envy and malign them for their enjoyments, ſo it is apparent alſo, that they are ſo far from having leſs to doe than their Inferiors, that on the contrary the Gentleman's Life ſeems to be far the buſier of the two.

Beſides all this, Gentlemen having uſually more ingenuous Education, and conſequently are preſumed to have more exerciſed and improved Minds, may therefore be able to employ themſelves, if all other buſineſs ceaſed, and fill up the vacant ſpaces of their time with ſuch

ſuch delightful and profitable Entertainment as others are incapable of.

Phil. That, Sir, that laſt Point is the thing I would fain learn, namely, how to fill up the vacant ſpaces of Life (as you call it) ſo as to leave no room for temptation to Debauchery

Sebaſt. I am heartily glad to ſee you of that Mind; but I aſſure my ſelf there is nothing I can ſay to it, but what your own diſcretion will prevent me in. However, if it be your deſire that I ſhould enlighten your thoughts by opening of my own, we will then, if you pleaſe, examine this matter between us, and by that time we have compared the Period of our Lives with the variety of buſineſs that occurrs in it, I am out of all doubt that you will be then throughly ſatisfied that we have neither ſo much time as to be a burthen to us, nor if it were more than it is, ſhould we be at a loſs for the beſtowing of it. And this, without reſorting to any of the Extravagances afore-mentioned.

An eſtimate or account of the time and buſineſs of Man's Life.

Let us then in the firſt place ſuppoſe that the Lives of Men at this Age of the World, and particularly in this Climate and Countrey, amount commonly to ſeventy Years; for though it is poſſible here and there one out-lives that term, yet it is pretty evident by the moſt probable Calculations, that there is not above one Man in thirty or thereabouts that arrives at that Age: However, I ſay, let us at preſent ſuppoſe that to be the common Standard.

Now to diſcover what an inconſiderable duration this is, let us but ask the opinion of thoſe that have arrived at it, and they will aſſuredly tell

tell us, that all that whole term when it is paſt ſeems to be a very ſhort ſtage, and quickly run over; or if we had rather truſt to our own experience, let us look back upon twenty or thirty years of our own Lives, which though it bear a very great proportion towards the Leaſe of our whole Lives, yet when it is over ſeems to be but a little while to us, and that Time, as it is uſually pictured, fled upon Wings———

Phil. I pray pardon me, if I a little interrupt the thred of your Diſcourſe; you may eaſily continue it again, and for failing I will remember where you left off. That which I would ſay by the way is this, I can verifie the truth of what you were ſuppoſing, by my own Experience, and have often wondred what ſhould be the reaſon of it, that Men have quite different apprehenſions of time paſt and time to come. When we look back (as you well obſerve) upon twenty or thirty years which are gone, they ſeem but a trice to us; but if we look forward, and forethink of ſo many years to come, we are apt to fanſie we have an Ocean before us, and ſuch a vaſt proſpect that we can ſee no end of it. Now I ask your Opinion, what it is that puts ſuch a fallacy upon us, for other it cannot be; foraſmuch as the ſame term of years, whether it be reckoned forward or backward, paſt or to come, muſt needs really be of the ſame length and duration.

Sebaſt. It is verily ſo as you ſay, and the Obſervation is very ingenious and pertinent to the buſineſs in hand. But to give you an account of the reaſon of that different eſtimate, I can ſay but theſe two things, *viz.* Either as it is in the

the nature of hope to flatter us, ſo all things ſeem bigger at a diſtance: and whilſt they are in expectation only, than what we can find them to be in fruition. Or elſe it muſt be, that what is paſt of our lives we have freſh and lively remarks upon, by remembring the notable paſſages that have fallen out within that compaſs, by which means thoſe equally remote portions of time are brought nearer to our eye.

But on the contrary, in the time which is to come, we can have no remarks upon it; becauſe not knowing what ſhall happen, we have nothing to fix our Thoughts upon, and ſo it looks like a vaſt Ocean to us. For you know that things which are in confuſion ſeem to be more than the ſame things when they are digeſted into juſt order and method. And in travelling, you obſerve that twenty or thirty Miles which we are well acquainted with, and have frequently traced, ſeem ſhort and inconſiderable; but the ſame length of Journey in an unknown Way ſeems very tedious and formidable to us. Thus I think it is in the Caſe you have propounded; but now, if you pleaſe, let us paſs on where we were going.

I ſay then, ſuppoſe the term of our lives be eſtimated at the duration of about ſeventy years, yet in the firſt place we muſt ſubduct from this Summ a very conſiderable part as taken up in Childhood & Youth, and which ſlips away we know not how, ſo as to eſcape our obſervation, being wholly ſpent in folly and impertinency, but certainly loſt to all manly purpoſes: to which if you add the infirmities of Old Age, (which though it do not equally

A Practical Demonſtration of the littleneſs of our ſpare-time.

equally in all Men, yet) always more or leſs renders ſome part of our time uſeleſs; you will think it no unreaſonable *Poſtulatum* if I ſuppoſe that both together take up a third part of the whole.

Then, in the next place, let us conſider how great a proportion is taken up in ſleep, in eating and drinking, in dreſſing and undreſſing, in trimming and adorning, and, to be ſhort, in the mere neceſſity of the Body. I have read of a brave *Saxon* Prince of this our Native Countrey, who allowed only eight hours in the Day, or one third part of his time, to theſe uſes; but I doubt few mean Men follow his Example: and if we take meaſures from common experience, we ſhall find that theſe meaner Offices take up near, if not altogether, half the time of moſt perſons. And ſo another third of the whole is gone, and only one poor third remaining for all other occaſions.

Then again, out of that remainder a very great ſhare will be challenged by neceſſary buſineſs, the Affairs of our Eſtate or Calling, and the Concerns of our Families; and theſe occaſions are ſo importunate that they will not be denied without culpable ill Husbandry, nor gratified without a large proportion of the aforeſaid remainder.

Moreover, whether we will or no, another part will be raviſhed from us by Sickneſs and Phyſick, in Civility and Complement, in Viſiting and being Viſited, in Journies and News, and a thouſand Impertinences; ſo that he muſt be a very good and wary Husband indeed that ſuffers not great Expences this way.

And after all this, here is nothing for reading

ing and Study, for Meditation and the Improvements of our own minds; nay, not for Religion and Devotion towards God, and the unſpeakable Concerns of another World, which in all reaſon may moſt juſtly put in for their ſhares.

Phil. All this is very true; but what do you inferr from this Account?

Sebaſt. I dare truſt your Judgment to make Inferences from the Premiſes: For, in the firſt place, I know you cannot fail to obſerve, and that with a juſt indignation, that the lighteſt matters of our Life have the greateſt ſhare of our time ſpent in them: Folly and Infirmity, Infancy and Dotage, take up the greateſt room of all: then worldly Buſineſs and Pleaſure exhauſt the moſt of that which is left, and the Mind and nobleſt Intereſts have leaſt of all left for them.

And then ſecondly, you cannot but note with admiration how very little ſhare God Almighty hath even from the very beſt of Men. And you cannot but adore his Goodneſs, which rewards with Eternal Life that little time in which Men work in his Vineyard; for whether Men come in at the Eleventh Hour or ſooner, it is too plain that ſcarcely an Eleventh part of our time is ſpent in his Service. But that which I aim at in this Calculation is, to demonſtrate to you, that there is a great deal more reaſon that Men ſhould endeavour rather to redeem Time from leſſer occaſions than to laviſh it in Impertinences, that ſo our weightier Concerns may have the more tolerable allowances: And to be ſure he muſt be a very ſoft and feeble Man, that, after all theſe ends

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are ſerved, can complain that Time lies upon his hands, which was the thing to be proved.

Phil. I am now amazed at my own ſtupidity, that could think fit to put ſuch a caſe to you. Lord! what vain Fools are we, that complain of plenty when we are rather ſtraitned and in want? What ſilly Prodigals are we, that are ſo far from ſparing betimes, that we are not ſo much as frugal, when all theſe claims and demands come in ſo thick upon us? I have often heard it ſaid, that by keeping a ſtrict account of Incomes and Expences, a Man might eaſily preſerve an Eſtate from dilapidation; but now I percieve, that for the want of a little of your Arithmetick *to number our days*, we run out our Leaſe of Life before we are aware; and fanſying we have enough to ſquander away upon every trifle, we have ordinarily little or nothing left to defray the moſt weighty occaſions.

And, with your pardon, let me tell you, I think now I have found where the Shoe pinches: It is not (I perceive now) a ſurpluſage of time that tempts us to ſeek out thoſe diverſions aforeſaid; but the mere vanity of our Mind, which hath a fondneſs for them: and then Cuſtom and Example have made them ſo natural and almoſt neceſſary to us that we think the time long till we are at them. Not that we have much to ſpare, for God knows we have little enough; but becauſe we think much of all that which is otherwiſe employed. And this I doubt is the true reaſon why we are impatient of long Prayers, and offended with a long Sermon; which whoſo obſerves, would perhaps charitably ſuppoſe

poſe, that the urgency of Buſineſs would not permit us to attend them; but we utterly deprive our ſelves of that pretence when we complain that time lies upon our hands. To ſpeak truth therefore, and ſhame the Devil and our ſelves too, We can hardly ſpare time for God, becauſe we love him too little: but we have abundance of ſpare time for our idle Diverſions, only becauſe we love them too much.

Innocent and pleaſant Employments of Time.

Sebaſt. Dear *Phil.* you have hit the very Mark: But let us go on, and ſuppoſe that our ſpare time were more than it is or poſſibly can be (upon the Premiſes) yet it will be no hard matter to find out more pleaſant, as well as more innocent entertainments of it than thoſe now in requeſt.

For in the firſt place, there are ſome Employments every whit as delightful as Recreations themſelves; ſuch as in particular, Planting and Gardening, in which a Man may not only have the pleaſure to contemplate the admirable beauty and variety of the Works of God, but by improving the nature of Plants, by altering the ſpecies, by mixture and compoſition of ſeveral beauties and perfections into one, by deducing one out of another, exalting one by another, and in a word, by giving being and continuance to ſeveral things, he becomes a kind of Creator himſelf, if I may without offence uſe ſuch an expreſſion. This kind of buſineſs miniſters ſo many and ſo raviſhing Delights, that I remember *Cato* preferred it before all the Pleaſure of Youth, and thought the entertainment of his elder Years herein a good exchange for the voluptuouſneſs of younger Years, which he had now

now loſt all uſe and apprehenſion of; nay, I think *Epicurus* himſelf placed a good part of his Felicity in the delights of his Garden. And above all I am certain that God Almighty who knew beſt what ſatisfactions were to be found within the whole Sphere of his Creation, and was not invidious or niggardly towards Men, made choice of this for the entertainment of our firſt Parents in their ſtate of Innocency, and before their Folly and Sin had damned them to care and toil, and to the ſweat of their Brows.

Again, There are ſome Exerciſes and Recreations both of Body and Mind, which are very ingenuous as well as divertive, ſuch as Singing, Muſick, Painting and the like; in which a Man rather puts a pleaſant deception upon himſelf in point of time, than wholly loſes it. And they are ſo far from debauching his mind or raiſing his paſſions, that they only exalt a Man's fancy, but otherwiſe compoſe his temper even to admiration.

And if you will promiſe not to laugh at my peculiar humour, I will refer another Inſtance to this Head, and tell you, That methinks the playing with a pretty humour'd Child of three or four years old, or more or leſs, is ſcarcely inferior in delightfulneſs to any of the former; where you ſhall obſerve innocency of mind, benignity of temper, ſweet and gentle paſſions, eaſie and unforced mirth, unfeigned love, pretty endearments of affection, pleaſant endeavours to ſpeak and expreſs it ſelf, little dawnings of reaſon and fancy, and innumerable other things, which a Man can feel rather than expreſs. I called this my peculiar fancy, but I do not know why it ſhould be peculiar to me;

I ſuppoſe it may be more general, however I confeſs to you I am much the better pleaſed with it, becauſe I find in the Goſpel that our Saviour himſelf was not diſpleaſed with it.

Beſides all theſe, there are ſome Offices of Humanity and Charity which afford a Man unſpeakable delight in the diſcharge of them: ſuch as comforting a Friend or Neighbour in his affliction, or aſſiſting and counſelling him in his difficulties, promoting Peace, and making an end of Controverſies, relieving a poor Man in his hunger, *&c.* In all which, beſides the ſatisfaction a Man hath in his own mind, upon conſideration that he hath done well and worthily, he is alſo ſenſible of a re-action, and as it were by reflection participates of the pleaſure thoſe perſons find by his good Offices towards them. For to ſay nothing of any of the other, what a refreſhment is it to our own Bowels, to obſerve the Appetite and guſto with which a poor hungry Man feeds upon that which you charitably ſupply him with. And it will do a Man's heart good to take notice of the ſtrange change wrought in ſuch a perſon by a bountiful entertainment, his countenance more cheerful, his ſpirits brisk, his heart light, his whole temper more ſweet and ingenuous; all which who can be acceſſory to without a kind of vertuous Epicuriſm?

All theſe which I have named are ſincere and manly pleaſures, without noiſe and without danger, which neither raiſe a Man's paſſions nor drown his reaſon; they are neither ſo fine and ſpiritual that the Body can have no participation of them, nor ſo groſs and feculent that the mind ſhould be aſhamed of them. And in ſome

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or other of theſe every Man that pleaſes may ſpend his vacant hours with ſatisfaction.

But let me now go a little higher, and what if we take in ſomewhat of the other World to ſweeten the preſent Life? What think you, after all, of Prayer to God, and Reading the Scripture, may not a man beſtow ſome of his time in theſe with as much pleaſure as devotion? and, ſo (to allude to the Modern Philoſophy) fill up the void ſpaces of his Life with Celeſtial matter?

Of Prayer, and reading the Scriptures.

As for the former of them, Prayer, I remember you well obſerved that ſeveral of thoſe Men that complain as if they were over-burthened with time, yet love to make as ſhort work with this as they can; wherein they betray either ſome meaſure of Atheiſm in their hearts, or a great deal of ſenſuality in their Affections: and I cannot tell whether they more contradict themſelves, or diſcover their ſhamefull ignorance of the nobleſt pleaſures of Life. For beſides that it is highly agreeable to the beſt reaſon of a Man's mind, that he ſhould do all honour to the Divine Majeſty, and daily pay his homage to his greateſt Benefactor; and nothing ſure can be more delightful than the exerciſe of our higheſt powers about their proper Object. And beſides that, Prayer is the known way to obtain the Divine Bleſſing, upon which all the pleaſure and comfort of our Lives depend, and never fails of ſucceſs one way or other.

Beſides all this, I ſay, and abundance of other advantages of it, it is the very pulſe of the Soul, which keeps the Spirits florid and vital; it anſwers to the Motion of the Lungs in

the Body, and exhales thoſe melancholy Vapors that would choak and ſuffocate our hearts: By it we put our ſelves under the divine Protection, and our Spirits are heightned and fortified by the Patronage of ſo high a *Genius*, who can ſecure us againſt all aſſaults and dangers whatſoever. When we have commended our ſelves to the Divine Providence by Prayer, our hearts are at reſt; we are ſecure ſleeping and waking; we are never alone, but have always one to ſecond us; whatever the iſſue and ſucceſs of our endeavours be, our minds are quieted; if things anſwer our wiſhes, we have a double ſatisfaction, that God Almighty favours us, as well as that our labours are ſuccesful; if things miſcarry, we impute no folly, nor omiſſion to our ſelves, we have done all that was fit for us to doe, but it pleaſed Divine Wiſedom to diſappoint us. Beſides, the frequent approach of the Divine Majeſty puts a gravity upon a Man's countenance, checks and keeps down all exorbitancy of paſſions, begets an ingenuous modeſty, and makes Men as well aſhamed as afraid to doe an unworthy action.

To all which add, That by the advantage of our Prayers we are inabled to become a publick Bleſſing, and every private Man a Benefactor to the whole World; than which thing what can be either greater in it ſelf, or more acceptable to a great and generous mind? Conſequently, what can a brave and publick-ſpirited Man employ his time in with more delight, than in that which (whatſoever his Fortunes and external Condition be) will make him a Bleſſing not onely to his Friends and Neighbourhood, but to the Country and Times he lives in, that even

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Kings and Princes are really beholden to him. Nor is it neceſſary that much time be taken up herein to ſerve all theſe great ends, nor much leſs is it my intention to commend affectedly long Prayers, a little time, and a great deal of heartineſs beſt doth the buſineſs of Religion, and that little ſo employed will make all the reſt paſs away the more ſweetly and comfortably.

And then for Reading and Meditating upon the Holy Scripture, the Pſalmiſt hath told us, that the good and bleſſed Man's *delight is in the Law of God, and* that *therein he meditates day and night.* And ſurely any Man may be able to entertain a few moments in it. If curioſity ſway with us, there are as admirable things in the Holy Scriptures as the mind of Man can deſire; if we affect Hiſtory, we have there the ancienteſt and moſt faithful Monuments in the World; thoſe, without which all Mankind had continued in their Nonage and Childhood to this day, as being ſo far from able to give an account of the beginning of the World and original of things, that they could not have looked backward many Ages, but they would have been utterly bewildered in Miſts and Fables as abſurd as the wildeſt Fictions of Poets. Beſides, without this Record all the wonderful Methods of Divine Providence, (which are the aſſurance and comfort of the preſent Age, and the obligation to Vertue and Foundation of Piety and Religion) had been buried in oblivion.

If we ſeek after Knowledge, either natural, moral or prudential, where is there ſuch another Treaſury of it to be found as this, where we have not only the Relations and Obſervations

of the wiſeſt Men in all Ages paſt, but the diſcoveries of the Divine Majeſty, the depths of infinite Wiſedom (that know the true reaſon of things) laid open.

If we are pleaſed with the foreknowledge of things to come, (as what Man of Soul can chuſe but deſire to ſee beyond the Curtain) then all the Preſages, Prognoſticks and Divinations, all the moſt rational Inductions of the wiſeſt Men, are but ſilly ſurmiſes and idle dreams to the Predictions of the Holy Prophets, which give us light to the World's end, and a view of another World; and have both aſſured their own credit, and warranted our belief of what is yet to come by the well known accompliſhment of their former Predictions.

If we would improve our ſelves in Vertue, what ſurer Rule can we have than the expreſs Declarations of God himſelf? Who can preſcribe to him what ſhall pleaſe him, or preſcribe to us better than he that made us, and knows what is fit for us to doe? And what more full, plain, compendious and higher Inſtitution of Religion can there be than the Holy Scripture?

This brings God near to us, and us near to him; here you know his Mind, you ſee his nature, and hear him ſpeak; here you may ſtand as it were upon an *Iſthmus* or Promontory, and take a view of both Worlds; this is the light of our Eyes, the Rule of our Faith, the Law of our Conſcience, and the Foundation of all our Hopes. All this together ſure cannot chuſe but make the reading of the Scripture become a very ſerious, and yet a very delightful employment. And now, upon the whole matter, what think your, Dear *Phil.* may not a Gentleman

man entertain himſelf and his time without the relief of Drinking and Gaming?

Phil. What think I, ſay you? Why, I think worſe of my ſelf than ever I did. I do not wonder now at what you ſaid when we firſt came together, *viz.* That you could always find employment for your Time; but I wonder at my own folly: for I plainly ſee now that no Man can have time to be a burthen upon him that hath come honeſtly by it; I mean, that hath not ſtollen it from nobler Entertainments to beſtow it upon a Debauch.

Sebaſt. But yet this is not all neither. I perceive I have ſatisfied you both of the pleaſantneſs of ſome lighter, but innocent Exerciſes, which I named in the firſt place: and alſo of the great importance of Prayer and Reading the Scripture, which I laſt ſpoke of, yet as on the one hand I would not have a Man imploy all his vacant hours on the former, ſo neither on the other hand do I think he is bound to exhauſt them wholly upon the latter: No, *Phil.* our Bodies are compounded of various humours, our Souls conſiſt of ſeveral faculties; God is a good and benign Being, and conſults the good and comfort of all the Powers he hath created. Beſides all the forementioned, therefore (and thoſe which I have ſuppoſed, without naming them particularly) there is a way of entertaining our ſelves, called Study and Meditation. Study, I ſay, in general, not confined to any Subject, but onely directed to the general end of improving our ſelves and the time God hath given us in the World.

Of Study and Meditation, the advantages and the difficulties of it.

For why ſhould we abject our ſelves that have

rational Souls, an active, vigorous, intellectual Spirit in us? Is not this able to employ it ſelf, our time and our bodily Spirits too? Is not our mind large enough to embrace the whole World? Can we not bring upon the Theatre of our imagination all the occurrences of time paſt as well as preſent? Muſt we needs only pore upon the things juſt before our Eyes? Muſt our underſtandings lie fallow and barren unleſs they be continually ſtirred up by our ſenſes? Are our Souls only given us for Salt to keep the Body ſweet, or ſervilely to cater for our inferiour powers, and not rather to ſubdue and govern them?

Why ſhould not we remember we are Men, and improve our beſt Talent, ſharpen the ſenſe of our Minds, and enlarge and greaten our Spirits? What hinders but that a Man may converſe with himſelf, and never have better Company than when he is moſt ſolitary? How can a Man want Company that hath an Angelical Nature within him, or need diverſion that hath the whole World before him to contemplate?

What ſhould diſcourage or hinder Men from this courſe? Is it the pains and difficulty? Nothing in the World is pleaſanter when a Man is once uſed to it: Is it for fear we ſhould exhauſt our ſelves, and like the Spider, ſpin out our own Bowels in our Web? There can be no danger of that, an immortal Soul never wears out; and if the Body goes by the worſt, ſo long as the Spirit is bettered, there is no loſs in all this. Or ſay it ſhould be to no great fruit that we apply our ſelves to Study, yet at leaſt this is gotten by it, That we employ our time and keep our ſelves out of harms, which is as much as we now ſeek for.

Phil.

Phil. It is generally the fault of Eloquent and Contemplative Men to out-ſhoot the Mark they aim at, and whilſt they talk finely, to deliver very unpracticable things. Pardon me, Dear *Sebaſtian*, if I ſuppoſe this infirmity hath accompanied thoſe great accompliſhments in you, at this time. No doubt but Meditation is a noble entertainment of Time, and queſtionleſs he that hath once got the knack of it, nothing in the World is ſo pleaſant to him: but you muſt conſider there are very few who have ſo much command over themſelves as to hold their minds long ſteady and intent, and perhaps fewer that have ſufficient knowledge to employ their thoughts at home; it requires a great ſtock for a Man to be able to ſet up this Trade by himſelf. Beſides, many Mens Spleens are ſo near their Heads, and there is ſo great affinity between the Animal Spirits and Vapours, that he that goes to exerciſe the one ſtirs up the other: and oftentimes the greater the intention of mind is with which a Man ſets himſelf to think, the greater Cloud is raiſed, and the more impoſſible it will prove for ſuch a Man to diſcern any thing clearly. Your Advice therefore is very good for them that can receive it; but this is no *Catholicon*, no general Receipt.

Sebaſt. I thank you, Sir, moſt heartily for the modeſt and ſeaſonable check you gave to the career of my Diſcourſe: I muſt confeſs upon ſecond thoughts that all Men are not fit for Meditation, and therefore it cannot be their Duty; yet I muſt tell you withal, I ſuſpect more are unwilling than uncapable: and I doubt ſome are more afraid of awakening their Conſcience than ſtirring their Spleen by it. However, I have another

another Expedient to propound (for the purpoſe we are upon) which will ſupply the place of the former, and which, I am ſure, can be liable to no Objection; and that is, Conference or Diſcourſe: which when I have recommended to you, I ſhall have delivered my whole mind.

Of Friendly Conference, and the great benefits of it.

God Almighty hath given us Speech to expreſs our ſelves to one another. We are not left alone in the World ſo but that every Man hath ſome Friend or Neighbour to hold correſpondence with; why ſhould we not then entertain our ſelves, our Friends and our time in Friendly Communication, without the help of the Bottle, *&c.* This requires no great intention of Mind, no great Stock is required in this Caſe; this will ſtir up no Vapours from our Spleen; and by this way we may not only divert our ſelves, but elucidate our own thoughts, enlarge our experience, reſolve one anothers difficulties, and mutually pleaſe and profit one another.

And the more effectually to recommend this Expedient to you, I will firſt take the confidence to affirm, and do not doubt but I ſhall by and by make it evidently appear, That this is not only a very gentile and creditable way of converſation, but alſo (if it be rightly practiſed) a moſt pleaſant and delightful, and (which perhaps may ſeem the greateſt Paradox of all) one of the moſt healthful Exerciſes in the World.

The firſt of theſe you will eaſily grant me when you conſider that, Diſcourſe is that which principally diſtinguiſhes a wiſe Man from a Fool. For what elſe do we take our meaſures

Of

of one another by? If a Man diſcourſe of weighty matters, and keep cloſe to the Point, and ſpeak ſharply in the Caſe, we account him a worthy Man. But contrariwiſe if he talk flatly, inſipidly and impertinently, we have no eſteem or reverence for ſuch a Perſon, let his outward appearance and circumſtances be otherwiſe what they will.

It is certain we cannot know a Man's thoughts or the ſenſe of his mind till he expreſſes them: A Fool we ſay is a wiſe Man ſo long as he holds his peace, and a wiſe Man differs nothing from a Fool till he ſpeaks. For a Man's Actions may be by rote or cuſtome, or the direction of ſome other perſon, but a Man's Diſcourſe is his own. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*, ſaid our Saviour. The tongue will betray not only the inclinations and paſſions of the heart, but the very ſenſe and capacity of the mind; and the latter much more than the former (as the Liquor will carry the tincture of the Veſſel.) 'Tis poſſible indeed for an evil and vicious Man to talk vertuouſly, and a ſilly Man may get into a Road of wiſe Sayings; but the Leſſon he hath conn'd will ſoon be at an end, and then he will no more be able to hold out at that rate than a flaw'd Veſſel to make the ſame ſound with a good one. Wiſedom and Folly are widely different in their natures; but it is Diſcourſe that lays them open and makes the diſtinction conſpicuous: why then ſhould not a Man by practice endeavour to become expert at that which, if he be Maſter of, will be his Glory, but to be ſure will make his Character.

But now for the vulgar methods of Converſation, which commonly conſiſts of Drinking and

Drinking and Gaming are Levelling Practices.

and Gaming, they are no better than Levelling Practices, that obſerve no diſtance, nor make any diſtinction amongſt Men, the Maſter and Servant are at *Hail Fellow*, the Gentleman and the Clown are upon the Square with one another, the Man of Parts and Learning and the verieſt Ideot and Coxcomb are upon even Ground in thoſe Entertainments.

As for Drinking, I cannot ſufficiently wonder at that abjection of mind in Perſons of Quality, who, as if they conſented to their own degradation, will contend for Victory with their Inferiors at equal Glaſſes: when it is notorious, that a Porter ſhall bear more than a Gentleman; and a fine Wit ſhall be baffled and diſordered with that which a thick Scull'd dull Sot will carry away well enough, and come off as wiſe a Man as he entred. But ſuppoſe the Gentleman ſhould outdoe the Clown, and the Wit the Dunce; yet as the Match was made very imprudently, ſo the Victory would be inglorious.

And then for Gaming, I have heard of an Ape that hath been too hard for his Maſter at that moſt ingenuous Game of Cheſs. But I have known one very near to a Natural that hath been a great Maſter at it. And certainly it is very eaſie to imagine that in thoſe other Games, which are governed by Chance, the Victory may fall to the leſs worthy Perſon. It ſeems therefore a very mean thing to be eagerly intent upon that to which a wiſe Man hath no better Title than a Fool, and, if we believe the Proverb, much leſs. To be ſure no Man can be ſo vain as to think himſelf the wiſer or better Man

Man for his Conqueſt. But now Diſcourſe diſcriminates Mens real abilities, and bears an impartial Teſtimony to a Man's worth, and the Conteſts of reaſon are therefore truly honourable, becauſe the wiſer Man is ſure to have the Victory.

But then ſecondly, for the pleaſure and delightfulneſs of Diſcourſe, it cannot be doubted but that the Higher Powers in a Man are attended with the ſweeteſt delights, in the exerciſe of themſelves; and the more ſtrong and vigorous the Conſtitution of thoſe Powers is, the more quick and raviſhing muſt the ſenſe of their peculiar pleaſure conſequently be. This the experience of all ſtudious Men bears teſtimony to, amongſt whom one Truth ſifted out by reaſon is more pleaſant than all the Entertainments of an Epicure. For in Diſcourſe there is a very grateful reliſh in the mere bandying of Arguments to and fro; Great curioſity in diſtinguiſhing, prettineſs in a handſomely dreſs'd probability, ſurprize in Paradoxes ingenuouſly maintained, admirable beauty in that ſtrange variety of Colours in which a good Wit will repreſent things, far beyond the hand and skill of a Painter; all which, with a thouſand other particulars which I paſs by, render the pleaſure of Diſcourſe as much tranſcendent to all inſtances of ſenſuality as Reaſon it ſelf is above Senſe, or a Man ſuperior to a Beaſt.

The Pleaſures of Diſcourſe.

And now, in the laſt place, for that ſeeming Paradox concerning the wholeſomneſs of Diſcourſing; it is obſerved that they who are curious of the health of their Bo-

Diſcourſing an healthfull Exerciſe.

dies

dies, to the end that they may invigorate all their powers and faculties, have to that purpoſe found out appropriate Exerciſes to all the principal parts; for ſo they ſay, walking is peculiarly good for digeſtion, by gently agitating the Stomach and Bowels; riding is ſingularly beneficial to the Head; playing at Bowls helps the Reins; and the uſe of the long Bow, is eſpecially commended for opening the Breaſt and Lungs, *&c.* Now I think I may be bold to ſay, that whatſoever each of theſe is to its reſpective part and member, that will ſmart and vigorous Conference perform to the whole Man. For as to the very bodily powers, it warms the Heart and Stomach, dries the Brain, opens the Lungs, quickens the motion of the Blood, and brings a freſh and florid Colour into the Face and whole Habit. And then as for the better part of Man, Diſcourſe raiſes the fancy, exerciſes the memory, clears the thoughts, enlightens the judgment, and improves the reaſoning of the mind. To which add, if you pleaſe, that it diverts melancholy, puts off dozing, baniſhes anxious thoughts and ſollicitude, and in a word, holds a Man ſo fully employed, that it leaves no room for the very temptations of the Devil.

And now I appeal to you, judge whether I have performed my promiſe or no: If I have, then beſides all the aforementioned, here is a manly employment of Time always at hand, an exerciſe that every one is capable of that hath a Tongue in his Head, and a Soul in his Body. Thus we may treat our Neighbour, and coſt us nothing, but what we (it ſeems) have too much of, I mean Time. And thus we may profit our ſelves,

ſelves, and oblige him too beyond all other entertainments.

Phil. I have a great reverence for your judgment; but in truth I cannot tell what to ſay to this Goſſipping kind of Diverſion; and till this moment I never thought lip-labour had been of ſuch value. As for thinking Men, the World is content to let them enjoy the reputation of being wiſe, or at leaſt to ſuſpend their judgment of them till they ſee the contrary in the unreadineſs of ſuch Men in all the inſtances of gentile and pleaſant Converſation. But as for talkative Men (I need not tell you) they have ever been accounted troubleſome and impertinent. And for your own part, Good *Sebaſtian*, give me leave to ſay that your Practice confutes your Doctrine; for after all this, which with great Wit and Eloquence you have ſpoken in the commendation of diſcurſive Converſation; and notwithſtanding that every one who knows you, knows your ſingular dexterity in managing any Subject that falls under Debate in your company; yet you of all Men are generally obſerved to be the moſt ſilent and reſerved. It is true at this time you have been diſpoſed to talk very freely with me (for which I am greatly obliged to you;) but at ſeveral other times it is a hard matter to pump any thing out of you.

Sebaſt. I ſee plainly that there is a wrong as well as a right Handle to every thing, and a continual proneneſs in Men to miſtake one another. Whenſoever any Vice is cenſured or expoſed, Men preſently think the contrary extream to that practice muſt needs be the Vertue; ſo whilſt I have been recommending ingenuous and friendly Conference, you repreſent

ſent me as if I had made it my deſign to plead for impertinent talkativeneſs: which truly I am ſo far from, that I think the World doth that ſort of Men no wrong in the cenſure it paſſes upon them; amongſt whom (if it be a wiſe Man's Lot to be caſt) he will think himſelf in the Region of Parrots, and for his deliverance be tempted to pray for deafneſs as a great Bleſſing. No, *Phil.* no, I would neither have men ſay all they can, nor much leſs talk whether they can or no. But I would have them firſt think to direct their ſpeaking, and then ſpeak, that a judgment may be made of their thoughts: I would that Men ſhould bend their minds whenever they relax their Tongues, and try the ſtrength of one anothers Heads in reaſoning rather than in drinking.

Juſt occaſions of Taciturnity or Reſervedneſs ſometimes in Converſation.

But then as for what your ſelf or others have obſerved of my Carriage in Campany, I confeſs the Obſervation is rightly taken, and I will ingenuouſly aſſign you the occaſions of it; which are (as far as I know my ſelf) ſuch as theſe: In the firſt place, it ſometimes falls out, that the Subject which other Men are diſcourſing of, is not very agreeable to my mind; as in theſe unquiet times, the common Theme is News; which as it is uſually managed is frequently attended with pragmaticalneſs and cenſure of the Government under which we live, or at leaſt the effect of it is the filling one another with fears and jealouſies, and the tormenting a Man's ſelf before the time, with his own or other Mens dreams and ſuſpicions. Now in this Caſe I am generally ſilent, at leaſt till I can find a fit tranſition

tranſition, and have the good luck to turn the ſtream of Diſcourſe ſome other way.

Again, ſometimes I am in the Company of thoſe who are every way my Betters; and there I think it as much more adviſable to hear than to ſpeak, as it is better to reap than to ſow.

Sometimes alſo I meet with a Company of deſultorious Wits who skip ſo haſtily from one thing to another, that they over-run me; and whilſt I am meditating what to ſay pertinently to the Queſtion in hand, they are gotten into another Subject: A Man muſt ride Poſt, or be left behind dy ſuch Diſcourſers.

But beſides all this, ſometimes a meer melancholy humour ſeizes me; which ſo benumbs me, that I am for that Fit altogether uſeleſs in Society. But let that be as it may, or however my practice falls ſhort of my counſel, I am certain my Example is not ſufficient to counterbalance the Reaſons I have given. Wherefore let me again heartily recommend it to you, not only for its own benefit, but if it were but to ſuperſede and lay aſide thoſe other ſoft and ſilly diverſions which have of late ſo far uſurped upon humane Society, as well nigh wholly to ingroſs to themſelves all Mens vacant hours, and a great deal more.

Phil. You have the Aſcendant of me, and may perſwade me to what you will: But, Good Sir, do not convert me from a good Fellow to a prating Fool. If I had been uſed to ſtudy, and been converſant in Books, as you have, I might have been in a capacity to pleaſe my ſelf, and perhaps the Company too with Diſcourſe; but for want of that Education, ſilence will generally be my beſt diſcretion.

Sebaſt. Books, *Phil*! It is neither Books nor much reading that makes a wiſe Man. How many ſhrewd Men have you known, and very well accompliſhed in moſt parts of Converſation, that never had any great matter of Clarkſhip? And on the other ſide, amongſt the great number of thoſe that have had all the advantages of Bookiſh Education, how few are thoſe that are really the better for it? With many Men Reading is nothing better than a dozing kind of Idleneſs, and the Book is a mere Opiate that makes them ſleep with their eyes open. 'Tis perverted into an Antidote againſt thinking wiſely, and made a creditable pretence for diſmiſſion of buſineſs. Such Mens ſtudying is onely an artifice to reconcile the eaſe and voluptuouſneſs of ſloth with the reputation of wiſdom; a gentile and wary kind of Epicuriſm, that ſurfeits without pain or ſhame, and in which Men ſpend their time without profit to themſelves or uſefulneſs to the World.

Of the uſe and abuſe of Books and Reading.

Again, there are ſome with whom Bookiſhneſs is a Diſeaſe: For by over-much Reading they ſurcharge their minds, and ſo digeſt nothing. They ſtuff themſelves ſo full of other Mens Notions, that there is no room for their faculties to diſplay themſelves. Such as theſe after all their Reading can no more be accounted learned, than a Beaſt of burden may that carries a Student's Books for him. Only ſo much Meat is properly nouriſhment to the Body as a Man can macerate and digeſt, as he can apply to the reparation of his Body, when he can ſeparate the ſuperfluities, and be ſtronger and lightſomer after it; more than this breeds ill humors, obſtructs

obſtructs the paſſages, and impairs the ſtate of health inſtead of advancing it; and ſo much Study only is profitable as will excite a Man's thoughts, as will afford hints or ſallies to the mind, or as will furniſh him with matter for Meditation and Diſcourſe; which two laſt things are the two great inſtruments of improving our ſelves, and therefore are to preſcribe the meaſures of our ſtudy and reading.

Wherefore it was well ſaid by a Great Man of our Countrey, That Reading indeed might make a full and copious Man, but Meditation made a profound Man, and Diſcourſe a clear, diſtinct and uſefull Man. For Reading at moſt doth but make a Man's mind equal to that of the Author he reads; but Meditation ſets him upon the ſhoulders of his Author, by which means he ſees farther than he did or could do. Or whereas the one may fill up all the preſent capacity of a Man's mind, the other, *viz.* Meditation, ſtretches and enlarges thoſe capacities. And then for Diſcourſe (which is that we are now ſpeaking of) beſides the advantages which it hath in common with Meditation, it opens and unfolds a Man's thoughts, and ſo brings his Notions to a Teſt, and makes proof of the ſolidity or weakneſs of his Conceptions: By which means, as on the one hand he ſhall not run away with the ſhadows of things inſtead of the ſubſtance; ſo on the other hand, when his apprehenſions are ſifted, and approved to be right and ſound, his mind will be confirmed againſt wavering, and he will become conſtant and conſiſtent with himſelf. I have often obſerved, with equal pleaſure and wonder, that by the mere propounding a difficulty to another, I have preſently been

able to reſolve that which was too hard for me, whilſt I revolved it only in my own Breaſt. For by that opening and unfolding of our thoughts, we let in light to our own judgments, and ſee clearer than we did before.

Beſides, a Man is too apt to have a partial fondneſs to the iſſue of his own brain; but when he hath brought his conceptions to the impartial Touchſtone of other Mens judgments, and as it were tried them by the light, he will neither be apt to be upon all occaſions over-confident, peremptory and dogmatical; (as you may obſerve many reſerved ſtudious Men to be, who when once they give vent to their thoughts, labour under a kind of incontinency of mind, and will be continually dictating and aſſerting at all adventures) nor on the other ſide will he ſtumble at every rub, and ſtagger at every objection, and ſo give up the beſt Cauſe upon the ſlighteſt (but unforeſeen) Attack.

And there is one thing more very conſiderable in this matter; namely, that by Conference a Man is accuſtomed to methodize and digeſt his thoughts in order; by which means his Notions are not only rendred more beautiful, but are more at hand, and alſo more perſpicuous and fitter for uſe. Whereas contrariwiſe (let a Man have read never ſo much, and meditated too into the bargain) without this expedient all his Notions will lie very odly and confuſedly, and come out all in a heap or huddle. In ſumm, He that uſes himſelf only to Books, is fit for nothing but for a Book; and he that converſes with no body, is fit to converſe with no body.

Phil. In truth, *Sebaſtian*, though I am very ſenſible of my own defects in Point of Learning; yet

yet in that little experience which I have had in the World, I have ſeen ſo many inſtances of the ill uſe, or rather no uſe that ſome Men have made of it, that I am not onely convinced there is ſome truth in what you ſay, but am the better inclined to be content with my own education. I have known ſome mighty Bookiſh Men like full Veſſels without vent, as if they were troubled with the Gripes; their Notions ferment in them, but they cannot utter them either to their own eaſe, or the profit of others. And again, ſome Mens learning hath ſerved only to make them pedantick and troubleſome, to make a noiſe with words and terms of Art, every whit as offenſive as the clatter of the Tablemen, which you laugh'd at even now. Notwithſtanding, by your favour, it cannot be doubted, but Learning hath mighty advantages; and I verily think you ſhould ſpeak againſt your own Conſcience if you condemned it in the general: Wherefore you muſt excuſe me if I continue of the opinion, that it is next to impoſſible, without more of it than I can pretend to, to hold ſuch Converſation as you are putting me upon.

Sebaſt. Excuſe me, Dear *Phil.* I do not in the leaſt put any ſlight upon Learning, or the means of it, Books and Study; I know well it is of admirable uſe in a wiſe Man's hand, becauſe it gradually and inſenſibly opens Mens minds, and both gives them a quicker ſight, and affords them a larger proſpect. And even on the moſt ordinary-parted Men it hath at leaſt this effect, to calm the Spirits, and to ſweeten their temper, by ſubduing the fierceneſs and ferity of Mens Conſtitutions. And therefore I heartily wiſh, that no Gentleman (eſpecially) were permitted

to attain his State and Fortunes without this qualification. So that all I was ſaying was only this, that you nor any Man of your capacity ought to diſcourage your ſelves upon the pretence of your leſſer advantages that way; foraſmuch as a wiſe and a good Man may (though perhaps not with the ſame eaſe) with a very little of it maintain an ingenuous and profitable Converſation.

Phil. Perhaps it may be ſo as you ſay: But then certainly a Man muſt have very extraordinary natural abilities to ſupply that defect.

Converſation improves a Man more than Books and Study.

Sebaſt. No, *Phil.* that needs not neither; for Diſcourſe will both ſupply the want of acquired abilities, and alſo improve the natural. I ſuppoſe you remember the Saying of *Solomon*, *As iron ſharpeneth iron, ſo doth the countenance of a man his friend.* I confeſs I have heard that Paſſage of the wiſe Man applied to the viſiting and comforting a Friend in Adverſity, which certainly doth mightily buoy up and ſupport a Man's Spirits when he finds that he is not altogether forſaken of his Friend, but owned by him in the loweſt ebb of his Fortunes. But I think it is every whit as true and applicable to that we are ſpeaking of, as if he had ſaid that the Company and Converſation of a Friend doth as well quicken a Man's wits, and improve his underſtanding, as one Iron Inſtrument is ſharpened by another. For, as I ſaid before, Conference and Diſcourſe give us the advantage of whatſoever he (we converſe with) hath read or thought upon that Subject, and ſo we reap the benefit of his reading, and of his meditations too. And then beſides

ſides that, we exerciſe our own judgment upon the matter ſo digeſted and prepared for us; the very preſence and attention of our Friend ſharpens the attention of our minds; his Queſtion prevents our extravagancy and wandring, and keeps us in a method, and his expectation from us holds our thoughts cloſe and ſteady to the Point in Debate. By all which not only the Stock of our knowledge is improved, but the Patrimony alſo; I mean the very powers of the Soul. In conſideration of all which that Great Man of our Countrey, whom I cited but now, doth not ſtick to pronounce, That if it ſhould be a Man's hard Fortune to have no body to converſe withal, it were better he ſhould talk to a Poſt than not open his mouth at all.

Phil. There you nick it, *Sebaſtian*; by that laſt word (whoever was the Author of it) I perceive a wiſe Man may make ſome uſe of ſuch a Tool as I am, if it be but to reflect and echo back his own thoughts upon himſelf. But in earneſt, Sir, now that you have encourag'd me, I begin to think ſomething better of my ſelf, and am reſolved to try what may be done in the way you recommend. But what would you have a Man diſcourſe about? I am afraid, if there be not ſome care in the Choice of a Subject, all will degenerate into Goſſipping and impertinent Chat.

Sebaſt. There is no need of ſolicitude in that Particular, foraſmuch as any, even the moſt obvious and occaſional Subject, will enable us to attain the end we aim at, provided it be followed home; I mean, talk of what matter you will, if ſo be you do not talk flatly and careleſly about it, but ſet your thoughts on work and

they will bring forth both pleaſure and profit. For the more exerciſe of our minds improves them as well as that of the body doth the ſtate of bodily health; and whilſt our thoughts are intent, though we are not ſenſible how time ſlips away, yet we ſhall be ſenſible in the concluſion that we have not quite loſt it.

Beſides, you have obſerved Muſicians to make the moſt curious deſcant upon the plaineſt ground, and have ſeen ſeveral of the *Indian* Manufactures, where the moſt exquiſite Art hath been beſtowed upon the meaneſt Materials: 'Tis not therefore the Theme, but the proſecution of it that is conſiderable; for, as I ſaid, Let that be what you will, if you purſue it with a train of Thoughts, and eſpecially if you be vigilant to take notice of, and apprehend thoſe hints that will thence be occaſionally ſtarted, you ſhall quickly be amazed to find your ſelf led before you were aware into ſome ſpacious and beautiful Field of Contemplation, wherein you may at once, both loſe and refreſh your ſelf.

Notwithſtanding, I acknowledge to you, that the pitching upon ſome good and uſeful ſubject at firſt is both the ſhorteſt and the ſureſt way to attain our end. For the very importance and concern of a weighty affair naturally rouzes up our minds, and collects and fixes our looſe and ſcattered thoughts; as you ſhall ſeldom ſee any Man drouſie and inattentive whilſt a matter of conſequence to his Life, or Credit, or Fortune is in agitation.

Therefore that having thus prepared you to it, I may now ſpeak a great truth to you, and that you may effectually ſhake off all the fooleries

ries in faſhion, and make converſation profitable. And if indeed you would awaken your Senſes, and improve your ſelf and your time together, let me above all things in the World commend to you Religious Communication, talk of the Concerns of a Soul, and of another World. This is a Subject of that weight and moment, that it cannot fail either to make you intent, or the Company you ſhall be in grave and ſerious; and it is withal ſo vaſt and large, that you can never fear to be run on ground; for it will always afford you freſh matter of Diſcourſe.

Diſcourſe about religious Matters recommended.

Phil. 'Tis true, the Subject is copious enough, and I may be ſure to have it all to my ſelf, becauſe no body will talk with me about it. Who is there now-a-days that troubles his Head with Religion, or eſpecially makes it any part of Converſation? If perhaps any mention of it fall-in by the bye, it is preſently let-fall again, as if it were too hot for mens Fingers, and at moſt it is made but a kind of Parentheſis, which may be kept in, or left out of the Diſcourſe without interruption of the Senſe. You have found me out a Subject indeed, but now you muſt ſeek me out Company too to treat upon it. For as the World now is, this will ſeem ſo irkſome a buſineſs, that no time will be ſo tedious as that which is ſpent upon it, and ſo we have loſt the whole deſign we were levelling at.

Sebaſt. Who (ſay you) will diſcourſe of Religion? Why, every body ſure that thinks of it, for it is a matter that comes ſo home and cloſe to every Man, that he muſt be a ſtark Sot, and deſtitute of the common ſenſe and diſcretion

diſcretion of a Man, that is not mightily affected with it.

For, tell me, is there any Man ſo abſurdly vain as to think he ſhall not die? Can any Man that obſerves the frail contexture of his Body, and the innumerable accidents he is ſubject to, think himſelf immortal? Or can he overlook the common condition of mankind, and when he ſees Men daily drop away and die in their full ſtrength, and in ſpight of all helps and advantages of preſervation; yet be ſo fond as to imagine he ſhall eſcape the common lot? And ſeeing what happens to another Man to day, may befal himſelf to morrow; or however, he is certain that he cannot be of any long continuance in this World; who, I ſay, that is ſenſible of this, can chuſe but pry beyond the Curtain, and bethink himſelf what ſhall come after?

Is it not the very temper and conſtitution of our minds to be inquiſitive of the future? Is it not a great part of our Prerogative above Beaſts, that whereas they are wholly taken up with what's preſent to them, and neither mind what is paſt nor to come; we by the largeneſs of our Souls embrace both, and do we not worthily count him an Idiot that is ſo ſhort-ſighted as not to ſee beyond his Noſe end?

The importance of Religion.

Doth not every wiſe Man provide for what may be? & do not even the moſt cold and incredulous ſuſpect at leaſt there may ſomething concern us after the preſent life? and is there any Man that can, if he would never ſo fain, quite rid his thoughts of it? Sure therefore every Man that thinks he ſhall die (that is, every Man that lives) thinks ſomething of Religion, if it

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be but for fear of the Worſt. Perhaps you will ſay, there are ſome Men, who though they know they ſhall die, yet think thy ſhall die as the Beaſts die, and have no concern hereafter: But are they worthy to be accounted Men that can fanſie ſuch a thing? A Beaſt indeed hath life, and ſenſe, and motion, and participates of ſome kind of fanſie and memory; but doth it underſtand a Diſcourſe, or weigh an Argument? Is it able to inferr from Premiſes, to remember things gone and paſt, and recall them to mind at pleaſure? Can it compare things together, gather the reſult, diſtinguiſh or paſs a judgment upon appearances? Will any Man be ſo ridiculous as to ſay, Beaſts are conſcientious too, that they reflect upon their own Actions, and accuſe or excuſe themſelves accordingly? or have they free-will to determine their Elections which way they pleaſe, even againſt the intereſt of their ſenſes? Now he that conſiders all theſe vaſt differences will, if he have the Reaſon of a Man, conclude it very improbable, that a Creature of this admirable make ſhould be onely deſigned to be a Pageant for a day, and be totally diſſolved at the date of this ſhort Life; eſpecally if he conſider withal, that theſe powers and capacities, which we have ſhewn Man to be indued with, do not only put him upon the thoughts, and expectations, and deſires of another ſtate; but render him marvellouſly fit for it, and capable of it; inſomuch that ſeveral of the nobleſt of theſe endowments are wholly in vain, if there be no ſuch thing, and that a Man died as the Beaſts do.

Beſides all this, doth not every Man that hath Eyes in his Head to obſerve the admirable ſtructure

ture of the World, conclude that it muſt be the Workmanſhip of a God, and he a great, a wiſe, a good and a juſt Being; and can he think ſo, and not reſolve there muſt be a great neceſſity of, and reality in Religion? that is, in the reverend obſervance of that Great Majeſty that deſerves it, and who hath both made us capable of performing it to him, and obliged us thereunto.

Now if all, or but any part of this be true, who is ſo mad as to have no concern for this God, Religion, and another World? and who is there that having any concern for them, can chuſe but think fit to make it ſome part of his buſineſs, the employment of ſome part of his time, and the Subject of his moſt ſerious debates? Hath any Man a moſt important Cauſe *ſub Judice*, and his Trial drawing on, and doth he never think of it, or diſcourſe his Caſe with his Friends? Hath any Man a great Eſtate in a Foreign Countrey, or a huge Patrimony in reverſion, and never ſpeaks of it? Hath any Man either a conſiderable Friend or a formidable Enemy, and never expreſſes himſelf concerning the one or the other? Surely therefore ſeeing Religion imports all theſe Concernments, a Man may find thoſe that will diſcourſe with him on the Point.

Phil. I readily conſent to you, that the buſineſs of Religion is a moſt ſerious Affair, and worthy of the greateſt conſideration; but beſides (as I have ſaid) there are very few will correſpond with a Man in diſcourſe about it; To tell you truly, I am ſomewhat of opinion, that it is not fit for that kind of treatment. As it is a ſacred, ſo it is a ſecret thing, tranſacted only between God and a Man's own Conſcience,

ſcience, and therefore is rather the Theme of a Man's thoughts, the ſolitary employment of his own heart, and ſo fit to be kept up in the Cloſet of his breaſt, and not ſo proper matter for Diſcourſe.

Sebaſt. And I as readily yield to you, Dear *Phil.* that the Soul and Spirit of Religion is very retired and inward, and ſo inacceſſible to other Men, that they can neither ſee it, nor judge of it. But though the firſt ſource and ſprings of it lie very deep, yet why the ſtreams of it ſhould not iſſue forth both in words and actions I cannot comprehend. I have read of a ſort of Men about the Apoſtolick times called *Gnoſticks*, who gave out that it was ſufficent to retain an inward belief and a right ſence of Chriſtian Religion in their minds and hearts, although they neither made profeſſion of the Faith with their mouths, nor practiſed the Laws of it in their Lives and Converſations. This I look upon as an hypocritical Artifice of theirs, to the end that they might make a ſaving bargain of Chriſtianity; a device to ſleep in a whole skin, and neither run any hazards, nor put themſelves to any difficulties for Conſcience ſake; and if they got nothing by Chriſt Jeſus, they thought they would be ſure to loſe nothing by him. But as I am very confident a Man of your ſincerity can harbour none of their deſigns, ſo I aſſure my ſelf what you have ſaid is not upon their Principles: Yet I muſt tell you, when the Apoſtle levell'd a blow at them he reach'd your fancy alſo; for he ſaith expreſly, *With the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made to ſalvation.*

Religion reſts not in the mind only.

Phil.

Phil. O pardon me, Sir, I make no Queſtion but that when a Man is called to make profeſſion of his Faith, and to diſcover what Religion he is of, then to diſſemble is to betray it, and to be ſilent on ſuch a critical occaſion is to revolt and apoſtatize from it; and in that ſenſe (I take it) another Apoſtle hath required us, *To render to every man that asketh us a reaſon of the hope that is in us*, &c. As if he had ſaid, Be not aſhamed of your perſwaſion, but own and defend your Religion, at the greateſt and moſt adverſe Tribunals where-ever it ſhall be impeached. But this is not the Caſe: We are not now ſpeaking of what muſt be done upon an authoritative Inquiſition into our Conſciences, or in times of Perſecution; but what is to be done in times of Peace, and in common Converſation? and then and there I am ſtill of Opinion, that at leaſt it is not an expreſs Duty to talk of Religion.

Sebaſt. Nor do I differ from you therein. For I do not aſſert it as an univerſal Duty to make Religion the matter of our Diſcourſe: But my meaning is, that it will exceedingly become us to do ſo ſometimes. And I verily aſſure my ſelf, that he that hath a quick ſenſe of God upon his mind, will have ſavoury expreſſions of him ſometimes upon ordinary occaſions (if a fooliſh modeſty do not too much overcome him) as well as witneſs a good Confeſſion in times of Perſecution: For as our Saviour ſaid, (in the paſſage I mentioned before) *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And it ſeems to me more eaſily conceivable, that there ſhould be a great fire without any ſmoke, or a great light without any heat, than that ſuch a

Man

Man as is inwardly principled with the fear and love of God ſhould be wholly Tongue-tied, or be either able or willing altogether to ſtifle and ſuppreſs his Sentiments. *Can a man carry fire in his boſom* (ſaid the wiſe Man) *and not be burnt?* Such an holy fervour as I ſpeak of will aſſuredly both ſeek and find a vent for it ſelf, and break out upon all fitting occaſions in reverend and affectionate expreſſions; by which means a Man in the firſt place eaſes his own breaſt, and beſides, thus this holy fire not only preſerves it ſelf from extinction, but propagates it ſelf alſo, warming and inflaming others.

You have heard, I ſuppoſe, of an odd Superſtition among the *Jews*, who out of a pretended reverence of the Name of God, and to preſerve it from prophanation (as they ſuppoſed) ſo long forbad the common pronunciation of it, till at length by the intermiſſion of uſing it, they had quite forgotten how to pronounce it. And thus I am afraid it would fare with Religion, if Men ſhould (out of I know not what conceit) forbear all Diſcourſe of God and another World, the reſult would be, that in time both world be forgotten. Nor is it (as you ſeem to imagine) only times of Perſecution that ought to rowſe up our Spirits, and call for expreſſions of our Zeal; for the road of buſineſs, the ſucceſſively flowing Tide of variety of Entertainments in this World, the ſoft Charms of pleaſant recreations, the blandiſhments of continual proſperity, and the ruſt upon our minds contracted by lying ſtill in eaſe and ſecurity, do more endanger

Religious Diſcourſe as neceſſary in times of proſperity as of perſecution.

danger the ſtate of Religion than thoſe trying times you ſpeak of. And therefore Atheiſm is well known to be a Weed that thrives moſt in the beſt Weather. The Seed that was ſown upon ſtony Ground fell away when the hot Sun ſcorched it, becauſe it had no depth of Earth; but that which was ſown among the Thorns was choaked too, though the Soil was never ſo good; in a word, Stormy Weather in the Church may tempt Men to be falſe and treacherous and Renegadoes, but I believe it never made an Atheiſt; that and prophaneneſs are the ill fruit of proſperity. So that you ſee there is need that the Spirit of Piety ſhould exert it ſelf as well in the one ſeaſon as in the other.

Neither will the publickly ſtated times or forms and exerciſes of Religion ſufficiently ſecure it againſt this danger, without ſuch voluntary efforts and ſallies of it as we are ſpeaking of: For in regard God is not to be ſeen, and the World is before us: the World to come is at diſtance, and the preſent World at hand: Ill examples are numerous, and good ones few and rare: And in a word, we dwell in ſo cold a Region, that we had need not only to uſe a great deal of exerciſe, but frequently to rub up one another. Therefore as *Socrates* is ſaid to have brought down Philoſophy (*è Cælo in urbes*) from ſpeculation to practice, from high Notions to the common Affairs of Life; ſo it ſeems neceſſary to us not only to be religious at Church, and devout in our Cloſets, but to allow it a ſhare in our daily and ordinary converſe.

Phil. Nay, if you be for that, what think you of a demure ſort of people amongſt us, that, as if their tongues were tipt with Religion, will

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be always Canting in a Scripture-phraſe. Theſe men ſeem to think it profane to ſpeak intelligibly and in the common Language, and account a *Jewiſh* kind of Gibberiſh to be the peculiar *Shibboleth* of the godly Party: And ſome of them arrive at ſuch a pitch either of Hypocriſie or Melancholy (I am loth to pronounce whether) that (upon the matter) they allow no other Diſcourſe to be lawful but what hath a tincture of Religion. Now for my part I look upon theſe people as very abſurd and ridiculous, and therefore I hope you do not intend to give them countenance in what you are ſaying. *Of hypocritical Canting.*

Sebaſt. So far from it, *Phil*, that I account the former of the two ſorts of men, which you ſpeak of, to be no better than a Generation of nauſeous Phariſees, foraſmuch as nothing betrays Hypocriſie ſo much as over-doing, and by that courſe of theirs they render Religion loathſome and ridiculous, and tempt Men to think it all Trick and Cheat. And for the other, they ſeem to be a pitiable, but crack-brain'd ſort of Men, who render Religion very uncomfortable to themſelves, and indeed impracticable and impoſſible. God knows we are not Angels but Men, and have concerns for the preſent World as well as for the other; and conſequently it can be no fault, but a juſt duty, to take care of them, and in order thereto to deliberate, to take advice, and to diſcourſe about them.

And this I am ſo confident of, that I verily believe the Apoſtle when he forbids *that any corrupt communication ſhould proceed out of our mouths*, and enjoins *that it be ſuch as is good to the uſe of edifying*, intended we ſhould interpret the lat-

ter expreſſion by the former, *viz.* that inſtead of rotten and filthy talk we ſhould tend ſo earneſtly to the contrary, that we might turn the ſtream of Mens Diſcourſe to that which is vertuous and profitable. And when he adds, *That it may miniſter grace to the hearers*; I think he requires that very thing which I have been recommending to you, namely, that we ſhould take all fair opportunities of bringing Religion into Plea, and of ſuggeſting good Meditations to one another. But I can by no means think he reſtrains all communication to that Subject, provided that which is about other matter be not lewd or fooliſh, but ſavoury and ingenious, uſeful and pertinent. And this I am the more confirmed by another paſſage of the ſame Apoſtle, where he directs that *our ſpeech be ſeaſoned with grace as with ſalt.* Which, as I underſtand it, imports as if he ſaid, that our moſt common converſation ſhould have ſome reliſh of our Religion; not be wholly religious, no more than our meat ſhould be all Salt, but ſeaſoned with it.

Common Diſcourſe lawfull.

Col. iv. 6.

Moreover, when our Saviour forewarns us, *that for every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account at the day of judgment*, I can by no means think his meaning was that every word that hath not immediate relation to Religion ſhould be accounted idle, and as ſuch incurr damnation. Far be ſuch an Interpretation from the merciful and condeſcending Laws of our Saviour: If this were ſo, Chriſtianity was a moſt anxious thing, and the lives of men muſt be perpetually vexed with ſcrupuloſity. But I take it, he intended only to repreſent to us that the

the Judgment to come ſhall be very exact and particular, ſo as to take notice, not only of our actions, and the greater paſſages of our lives, but that our very words alſo ſhall come into eſtimate and conſideration.

You ſee therefore I am ſo far from countenancing either an hypocritical Cant, or a ſuperſtitious Melancholy, that I do not think Religion ought importunely to thruſt it ſelf into converſation to the excluſion of every thing beſides it ſelf, but that it have place in our Debates, and where there is room for choice, there it is my opinion that we give it alſo the precedence.

Phil. Well, ſo far we are agreed, But I pray give me leave to go a little further with you. What kind of Religious Conference is it you would be at? Would you have Men enter into Diſputes about Divine Matters? This I the rather ask, becauſe there is another ſort of men (beſides thoſe we now ſpoke of) who ſeem to be mighty zealous of Religion; but their heat breaks out wholly this way, and they fill the place whereever they are with noiſe and clamour, with duſt and ſmoak: Nothing can be ſaid in their preſence, but inſtantly a Controverſie is ſtarted, the Cudgels are taken up, and to it they go: Scarcely any Body is Orthodox enough for them; for they ſpin ſo fine a Thred, and have ſuch Cobweb Divinity, that the leaſt bruſh againſt it is not to be endured: And yet withal, they are as poſitive and decretal in their aſſertions, that the Pope himſelf is no body to them. One would think they were Privy Counſellors of Heaven, they define with ſo great confidence

Of Diſputes in Religion, the vanity and miſchiefs of them.

what will and what will not pleaſe God, and damn to the Pit of Hell all that come not up exactly to their definitions and determinations. Theſe, I aſſure you, are men that bear a great port in the World, therefore I would fain know your opinion of them.

Sebaſt. Truly, *Phil*, I have no opinion of them at all: I fanſie neither their Faith nor their Charity; the one I account to be a great deal too big, and the other as much too little.

Phil. Agreed again. And now I'll tell you my thoughts a little more fully on this Point: I have always lookt upon this Diſputative Religiouſneſs, as no better than a new-faſhioned Knight-Errantry, which puts men continually upon queſt of adventures, and makes Monſters of every Wind-mill that comes in their way. For theſe men, if there do but happen to be an inconſiderate expreſſion let fall by any body, preſently raiſe ſuch a Tragedy upon it, as if Faith conſiſted wholly of Punctilio's, (or, as if you ſhould ſay, a Line was made up of Points,) and that every petty opinion were of moment enough to overturn the world. The contrary whereof I take to be ſo true that I ſuſpect whether that be of any moment in Religion which admits of Diſpute; for methinks it is not agreeable to the Goodneſs of God to ſuffer any thing of that univerſal concern to all men to remain very obſcure and controverſial. I ſhould think therefore this knotty kind of Timber never fit for edification. In plain truth (if you will pardon a rude Similitude) I fanſie theſe great Maſters of Diſpute to be like the ordinary Profeſſors of Rat-catching, who commonly draw more Vermine to the place than they deſtroy;

ſo

ſo theſe raiſe more Controverſies than they can decide, ſtart more Difficulties than they can aſſoil, and ſo beget Schiſms, gratifie Pride, inflame Differences, and foment Heart-burnings amongſt men, that might otherwiſe live peaceably together here, and for ought I know go to Heaven hereafter.

Sebaſt. Moſt ingeniouſly ſpoken, Dear *Phil*, and according to my very heart. If I thought I could match your Wit, I would add, That whenever I ſee a Knot of theſe Diſputants together, it puts me in mind of a Story or Fable, which you will, of a Company of Apes that had gotten a Glow-worm amongſt them, upon which they heaped Sticks and other little combuſtible matter, and laying their heads together, blow with all their might, as hoping to make ſome ſtrange improvement of that little ſhining Particle. But when they have done all they can, are neither able to encreaſe the light, nor much leſs to warm themſelves by it. So theſe buſie diſputing Wits, after all their bluſtering, neither bring any uſeful truth to light, nor warm their own or other mens breaſts with any ſpark of true Piety or Charity; but contrariwiſe frequently obſcure the one, and extinguiſh the other.

It is not therefore diſputing in Religion that I would provoke you to; but the improvement of the indiſputable Rules of it, *viz.* to make your ſelf and thoſe you converſe with, ſenſible of the vital Principles and Powers of Chriſtianity, not to chafe one another into a Paſſion, but to rub up one anothers Sentiments, and mutually to warm one anothers hearts with Devotion. By wiſe and affectionate applications to beget an

equal fervour of Spirit. And, in a word, that when Friends are met together they ſhould, like Flint and Steel, raiſe both light and heat by their mutual and amicable Colliſions.

And why, I pray you, Dear *Phil.* ſhould not Religion have its turn in our Converſation? What reaſon can be given that pious men ſhould not diſcourſe as freely and ſavourily of holy Things, as they, or other men, concerning common Affairs? Why ſhould our leſſer Concerns for this World, our ſecular buſineſs, be the only Subject of our Communication? Why, when ſome talk of their Trades, their Pleaſures and of News, and the like, ſhould not we talk of our Callings, as we are Chriſtians, of the intereſts of our Souls, and the hopes in another World? Why may not we diſcourſe of our Heavenly Countrey, whither we are going, as well as other men buſie themſelves about Foreign Countries, which perhaps they never ſaw, nor ever ſhall be concerned in?

You your ſelf acknowledge Religion to deſerve the moſt ſerious and attentive Conſideration of our minds, and upon the ſame account (if you be conſiſtent with your ſelf) you will be induced to believe it the moſt worthy and commendable Subject of Diſcourſe, as having all thoſe advantages that can recommend any Subject to the Debate of ingenious Men, as it were eaſie to make appear, if it were neceſſary.

Phil. Sir, I value your judgment, but muſt make uſe of my own; if therefore it be not too troubleſom to you, let me entreat you to make out that more fully to me, and then I promiſe you, I will either comply with the reaſons you give

give, or will ſhew you mine to the contrary.

Sebaſt. With all my heart, Sir; and to doe it with as much brevity as may be, I will deſire you to conſider in the firſt place whether this Subject, Religion, doth not contain in it the moſt noble and excellent Points of Enquiry, and conſequently be not the moſt worthy, not onely to take up the Affections, but to exerciſe the Wits of Men upon. Such as for inſtance, about the Nature and Attributes of God, the Wiſedom of that Providence that manages and governs the World, the nature of Spirits, and particularly of the Soul of Man, of Conſcience and Freedom of Will, of the Nature and Obligation of Laws, of the Grounds of Faith and the Efficacy of it, of the nature and ſucceſs of Repentance, of Redemption and the way of Propitiating God to Man, of the Judgment to come, the Reſurrection of the Body, and Eternal Life, with abundance more of the like nature; Points all vaſtly great and copious, profound and difficult, yet equally neceſſary and diſcoverable; ſuch as are able to ſtir up and provoke the greateſt capacities, and yet invite and encourage the meaneſt: In a word, ſuch things as that there is nothing elſe within the whole Sphere of Knowledge, that either requires or deſerves ſuch ſerious Debates.

Religion the nobleſt Subject of Diſcourſe.

Now how trivial and childiſh a thing were it whilſt we have all theſe wiſe and concerning matters to treat of, to be taken up only with Dogs and Horſes, with Drinks and Sawces, with Faſhions and News (as is too commonly the practice?)

And if you will pleaſe to conſider well the

aforesaid Particulars, and specially if you make trial of the course I am advising you, you will find these Subjects to be every whit as pleasant and delightful as they are necessary and important. For what can be imagined able to minister more delight than the lively representation of another World and Eternal Life, when men modestly reason together, and endeavour to affect one anothers hearts with the certainty and unspeakablen felicity of living for ever? of the ravishing contentment of enjoying everlasting Friendship? Of being out of the reach of Fate or Chance, out of the Sphere of Mortality, Sickness and Pain, Care and Vexation? of being exempted from all weakness, silliness, passion and infirmity? of being exalted above all temptation, and secured against all possibility of Apostasie? If Discourse of this nature doth not affect a man beyond all other, it must be because either he hath not the sense of a man, or not the Faith of a Christian.

Pleasantness of Religious Conference.

Or suppose men should take a Subject somewhat lower, and confer together about the Providence of God, that governs the present World. What a beautiful thing is it to observe all the variety of second causes to move in a just order under the first, toward certain and uniform ends, the Glory of God, and good of men! And that though the Divine Wisedom may lose and confound us in that admirable maze it seems to make, yet there is nothing defective or redundant in the whole World, no room for Chance, nothing unforeseen, no cross accident that hinders the projection, the same design is all along carried on, and at last certainly

tainly attained: But eſpecially if we confine our Contemplations of Divine Providence to that more peculiar Object of his, his Church, it will become yet more viſible and more comfortable; where if we wiſely confer times paſt with the preſent, and view the whole proceſs, we ſhall find that even Schiſms, Hereſies, Perſecutions and the greateſt calamities of the Church tend to its advantage in Concluſion. But above all, that which comes neareſt to a man, and muſt needs affect him moſt in the affair of Providence is, that thereby he finds himſelf under the protection of a mighty Being, that nothing befals him without the conſent of his Great Patron, that he is not left to himſelf to ſcuffle with ill Fortune and ſecond Cauſes as well as he can; but he is the charge of God Almighty, the Favorite of Heaven: This certainly is highly pleaſant and ſatisfactory above any thing in this World.

Or if we go lower yet, and make the Subject of our Diſcourſe to be about Peace of Conſcience, of the bravery of a Victory over a man's paſſions or temptations, of the unſpeakable comfort and ſatisfaction in doing good; any of theſe will afford us an entertainment beyond the flavour of Wine, or the odd variety of Chance in a Game; and indeed (to ſpeak to the Point) above all other Subjects of Diſcourſe and converſation. And although it be true that there is none of theſe but a man may contemplate with great ſatisfaction by himſelf alone, and in ſolitude; yet as all ſocial Exerciſes of the Body are more refreſhing than thoſe that are ſolitary, ſo it is here, the comfort that reſults from theſe Contemplations is doubled and multiplied by reflection

reflection in friendly Conferences. And all this together ſhall be my firſt Argument by which I recommend Diſcourſe of Religion; what think you of this, *Philander?*

Phil. I think very well of it: But, I pray you, let me hear out the whole Cauſe, and then I'll give my Anſwer.

Sebaſt. Why, then my ſecond Plea for Religious Diſcourſe is, from the conſideration that it is far the moſt ſafe, prudent and inoffenſive matter of Communication, and that in ſeveral reſpects: In the firſt place, it kindles no Coals, ſtirs up no ſtrife, inflames no bodies choler, and touches upon no Man's intereſt or reputation. You cannot talk of your ſelf, without vanity or envy; you can hardly talk of your Neighbours, without ſome ſuſpicious reflection; nor of thoſe that are fartheſt off, but you are in danger that ſomebody preſent may be concerned for them, as being of their Family or Acquaintance: It is very difficult to talk of News, but you will make your ſelf of ſome Party or other, and of Opinions without giving offence where you did not intend it; and you can ſcarcely ſpeak of your Governours and Superiours, ſo as to avoid all imputation either of flattery or pragmaticalneſs. But here you may talk ſecurely, and have this aſſurance, That if you profit no body you ſhall hurt no body; if you doe not benefit others, you ſhall not prejudice your ſelf. And then in the ſecond place, and in conſequence of the former, this kind of Diſcourſe will invite no Eves-droppers to liſten and carry Tales of what paſſed amongſt Friends in their Families and Privacies. For although

Religious Diſcourſe the moſt prudent.

although there be hardly any place ſo inacceſſible, nor any retirement ſo ſacred and inviolable as to be a ſufficient Sanctuary againſt this peſtilent ſort of Vermin; yet, beſides that matters of Religion afford them the leaſt hold or handle, the diſcourſing gravely of it is the moſt effectual Charm in the World to lay them; ſo that they ſhall either not be able, or not be willing to miſreport you. To which add in the third place, That this Courſe is one of the moſt effectual and unexceptionable ways of ridding our ſelves of the Company of impertinent People, which I reckon no ſmall advantage of this kind of Converſation. For this grave and ſerious way will certainly either make them better, or make them weary of our Company; that is, we ſhall either gain them, or gain our time from them; the leaſt of which two is very deſirable, and this is the effect of my ſecond Plea for pious Diſcourſe.

Religious Communication Genteil.

I will trouble you but with one more, and that is, from the Genteilneſs of this way of Converſation; it is the moſt humane, civil and obliging way of treating men, and therefore moſt becoming a Gentleman. We account it ſome degree of rudeneſs to talk *French* or *Latin*, or any other Language, which the Company in which we are do not underſtand: for it looks as if we were either jealous of them, and therefore would not have them know what we ſay to others; or elſe it is as if we had a mind to upbraid their ignorance who cannot correſpond with us in ſuch a Tongue. And, methinks, as it is uſually accounted a Piece of Pedantry, and an Argument of defect of generous

nerous Education, for a Student to quote his Authors, to talk in Scholaſtick Phraſe, and to vent his Metaphyſical Notions in the Company of Gentlemen; ſo neither is it very decorous and civil on the other ſide to be talking altogether in the peculiar Phraſe of Faulconry and Hunting in the Company of a Student: And it ſavours either of great defect (of other matter of Diſcourſe) in our ſelves, or of great contempt and inſolence towards thoſe others ſo treated. The Law of Civility is, to be obliging and condeſcending, to give fair play and ſcope to all we converſe with: Now nothing doth this like to religious Diſcourſe, foraſmuch as this being every man's Calling and Concern, there is no man but is, or ought to be preſumed to be in ſome meaſure skilful at it. When we talk of that we talk ſo as we may all talk, we parly of that which every man's Profeſſion and Intereſt obliges him to conſider, and which every man's Conſcience admoniſhes him of, and we ſpeak in the true univerſal Dialect which every man underſtands.

And this ſhall be my whole Apology at preſent for religious Conference: I could ſay ſeveral things more in the Caſe, but I will do like a wary Advocate, and reſerve them to reply to your Objections. And now, Dear *Phil*, what think you upon the whole matter?

Phil. What ſhould I ſay, or what can I ſay, but that a good Cauſe hath happened upon a good Advocate, a Cauſe able to make an ordinary man Eloquent, and Eloquence able to make a very indifferent Cauſe paſſable.

Sebaſt. Thank you for nothing, *Phil.* Do you think I will be put off with a ſtale complement?

plement? I have, I think, demonſtrated that religious Diſcourſe is both the moſt manly and rational, the moſt pleaſant and comfortable, the moſt prudent and wary, and to all this the moſt gentile and obliging. Deal now like a Friend and a Gentleman with me; tell me what flaws you have obſerved in my reaſoning, or what Objections you have to what I have ſaid.

Phil. To deal plainly and faithfully with you, and my ſelf too, I think your Reaſons are unanſwerable; and I have nothing to object, but to what you ſaid in the laſt place about the Gentileneſs of this way of Converſation; and that is only this, Methinks you talk in this Particular, as if you came out of a Cloyſter, or rather out of another World; for your Diſcourſe is not calculated for the Age we live in: Alas! the World is not at the paſs you ſuppoſe, you converſe with Books, which fill you with fine Speculations; but had you read men as much as I have done, you would find, as I ſaid before, that it would be a very difficult thing to get any Body to keep you company at that rate, notwithſtanding all the Arguments you have given or can give for it. You have read (and ſo have I) of one *Nicodemus*, that came to our Saviour on purpoſe to confer with him on the buſineſs of another World; but it is obſerved he came by Night, as if he was aſhamed of his Enterprize; and beſides, his Name is upon this occaſion (for ought I know) become a by-word and name of reproach to this day. And we have heard of ſome other perſons who in great agonies of mind have been inquiſitive into thoſe Affairs, and made Religion the principal Theme of their Diſ-

courſe

courſe: But then was then, and now is now; thoſe men would now be ſuſpected as not well in their wits that affected ſo antick a Garb: inſomuch that even Divines themſelves, who for the honour of their profeſſion, and upon account of the nature of their Office and Studies, may better be allowed to entertain ſuch Diſcourſes; yet (whether it be out of modeſty, or deference to the humour of the Age) it is eaſily obſervable, that they generally decline the way you recommend, and maintain Converſation at the rate of other men. Judge you therefore whether at this time of Day if a man in health ſhould talk ſo, he would not be counted an Hypochondrical perſon; or eſpecially if a Gentleman ſhould uſe it, he would not be wondred at as uncouth and unfaſhionable.

About Prophane Diſcourſe.

Nay, that is not the worſt of the Caſe neither: For the now modiſh way of treating Religion (if by chance it come in the way) is either to find flaws in it, and by Sceptical Sophiſms to undermine the very foundations of it, or elſe by Drollery to burleſque and render it ridiculous. To talk malapertly and ſcurrilouſly againſt it, and now and then to break a Jeſt upon God Almighty, is an Argument of wit; but to ſpeak gravely and reverently, is dull and tedious beyond meaſure, the ſure ſign of a formal Fop or a Phanatick.

Sebaſt. God forbid! Though I know you underſtand the World better than I do, becauſe (as you wittily upbraided me) my Converſation is moſt with the dead; yet I am in good hope you are now miſtaken, and that the ſtate of the Living is not ſo prodigiouſly bad as you repreſent

ſent it. I know there are a ſort of Tap-inſpired Debauchees (whoſe Wit is broached with the Hogſhead, and runs on tilt with it) that love to put tricks upon every man and every thing that is graver and wiſer than themſelves; nor do I ſo much wonder at it (conſidering the men) foraſmuch as if Religion be true, they muſt expect to be damned; and if it obtain its juſt veneration they muſt expect to be the ſcorn of Mankind. It is not ſtrange therefore if they (conſulting their own intereſt) either undermine it or blaſpheme it, that they may have their revenge upon it before hand. But take courage, *Philander*, for theſe mens tongue is no ſlander, neither upon due conſideration is there more of Wit than of Vertue in their Ribbaldry.

As for the more cunning part of them, who will needs be ſceptical, and think to give proof that they have more Wit than other men, only becauſe they have leſs Faith and Modeſty; who knows not how eaſie a thing it is to carp and make Objections? and that a trifling captious Coxcomb can ask more Queſtions than a wiſe man can anſwer? As any man may pull down faſter than another can build up. It is one ſign of a good judgment to be able to ask a diſcreet and pertinent Queſtion, and another to diſcern what ſatisfaction is fit to be expected; and then in the third place there is ſuch a Vertue as modeſtly to ſit down and reſt ſatisfied with ſuch an Anſwer as the nature of the thing will admit of, all which thoſe captious Hypercriticks are deſtitute of.

And then for the prophane Droll, every man of ſenſe and good manners knows, that

Wit

Wit without Bounds is the very definition of ſcurrillity, and that it is an eaſie thing to pleaſe a Man's ſelf in the one if he have no regard to the other, but will let fly at every thing that comes in his way. For my part, I look upon it as every whit as great an inſtance of dullneſs, as of impiety, to need ſo large a ſcope for Wit as theſe men allow themſelves. A good and true Wit will find matter enough within the Bounds of Sobriety, and not think himſelf ſtraitned though he ſpare God and Religion. The men therefore you ſpeak of are like blind *Bayard*, bold and dull; and if they now and then happen upon ſomething more than ordinary, who knows but the Devil may help them to it, who is always very ready to aſſiſt in this Caſe?

Of Drollery.

Therefore, my good Friend, ſetting both theſe kinds of men aſide, who are not the Copy, but the very Scandal of the Age they live in; let us conſider impartially what elſe there is able to diſcourage ſuch a way of converſing as we are upon. I have made it plain already, that all the reaſon in the World is for it, and it is as certain that there are no Laws againſt it; nor doth Authority ſo much as diſcountenance it in the leaſt. Beſides, there is, I am confident, as quick a ſenſe of Vertue and Piety in the preſent times, as in the beſt times of our Forefathers. And if there be ſome lewd and profligate men againſt it; yet there are others, and thoſe of the beſt Quallity, who think it ſo far from unbecoming their Rank, that nothing is more ſavoury and acceptable to them than pious Diſcourſe. And ſome of theſe, as I am informed, meet at one anothers Houſes uſually every Week, or as often as

as their occaſions permit, and there whilſt they walk in the Garden or ſit together by the fire (according as the weather invites them) they make it their buſineſs to re-inforce upon one anothers minds the great Principles of Chriſtianity, to affect their hearts mutually with the conſequences of them. And when this is done (they ſay) they return home as much raiſed in their Spirits, and cheered in their very Countenances, as the moſt jolly Good Fellows do from their merry aſſignations.

Phil. This is a pretty piece of News you tell me: But I pray you (by the way) do you know any of theſe men well? Are they not Conventiclers? I tell you plainly I ſuſpect this practice looks aſquint that way.

Sebaſt. No; very far from it I aſſure you. Thoſe I know of them are perſons moſt obſervant of the Laws of their Country, conſtant and devout frequenters of their Pariſh Church, true friends of the Clergy, zealouſly affected towards the Common Prayers and all the offices of the Liturgy, and do as much abominate and diſcountenance every Inſtance of that factious, Gadding, Goſſipping pretence of Godlineſs, as any ſort of men whatſoever do or ought to do; but having a quick ſenſe of Piety and a great concern upon them for another World, they endeavour by the aforeſaid means to preſerve and improve this temper in themſelves, and to propagate it to others; and this they do the more ſecurely, as being condemned by no Law; and the more innocently, as condemning none of thoſe that do not imitate them.

But I do not mention this particular Club of perſons with intention to make them a Precedent for all others; for beſides that their cuſtom is only voluntarily taken up, and upon no apprehenſions of any neceſſary obligation upon them ſo to do, for then it would be a great burden upon the Conſciences of Men, there are alſo ſeveral inconveniencies not unlikely to attend the practice, if not prudently managed, which I need not name. That therefore which I aimed at in the mention of theſe mens uſage, was (amongſt other proofs) to ſhow that the World was not ſo abandoned of true zeal and piety as you ſuggeſted, that prophane Diſcourſe hath not ſo univerſally obtained, nor that godly Conference was ſo antiquated and exploded; but that a Gentleman might ſtill adventure to be found at it, without impeachment of his prudence or dignity.

And moreover, I humbly conceive, that by how much the more there is of truth in your obſervation, by ſo much the more are all ſerious and ſenſible Men bound to put to their endeavours to turn the ſtream of Converſation from froth and folly, to this great and important Concern. For if this be out of faſhion, the more is the ſhame; and it is a thouſand pities but that we ſhould ſtrive to bring it into faſhion, if it were but to run down that prophane humour you ſpeak of. And eſpecially to repair the diſhonour done to the Divine Majeſty by thoſe ſcurrilous Libertines, who with equal madneſs and folly let their tongues run riot againſt him.

What! ſhall we be meally-mouth'd in a Good Cauſe,

Cauſe, when they are impudent in a bad one? Shall we be aſhamed to own God, when they defie him? Is God ſo inconſiderable a Being, that we dare not ſtand by him? Are Piety and Vertue things to be bluſhed at? Is Eternal Salvation become ſo trivial a thing, that we ſhould be unconcerned about it? Do we yield the Cauſe to theſe half-witted Profligates? Do we acknowledge the Goſpel to be indeed ridiculous? or do we confeſs our ſelves the verieſt Cowards in the World, and judge our ſelves unworthy of Eternal Life? For ſhame let us be ſo far from being either cow'd or byaſs'd by ſuch Examples, that we reſolve to make better where we cannot find them? Why ſhould we think ſo meanly of our ſelves, as to follow only, and not to lead? In a word, Why may not we begin a good faſhion, rather than fall in with a bad one?

More Arguments for religious Conference.

Beſides, I perſuade my ſelf this will be no very hard thing to do if we conſider the Authority and Majeſty of ſincere and generous Piety, and the guilt and baſe ſpiritedneſs of Vice and Prophaneneſs. If we be ſoft and timorous, that grows rampant and intolerable; but if Virtue ſhine out in its own rays, it dazles and baffles all thoſe Birds of Night. If Men will be perſuaded to aſſert their own principles manfully, to talk of God worthily and couragiouſly, the verieſt Ruffians will preſently be gagged and tongue-tyed; as in Conjurations (they ſay) name but God, and the Devil vaniſhes; ſo enter reſolutely into pious Conference, and it will preſently lay all the Oaths and Blaſ-

phemies and ſcurrilous talk of thoſe deſperate Wretches.

And (by the way) this is the moſt gentile, and alſo the moſt effectual way of reproving that kind of perſons; namely to deal with them as Scholars deal by one another; when any one ſpeaks falſe Latin, they only repeat it after him in true Latin, and as it ought to be; ſo here let us ſpeak right things of God when they ſpeak amiſs, and there needs no more to damp them; they will either turn on your ſide and ſpeak as you do, or leave the Field to you.

This, this, *Philander*, therefore is the only way to mend the World, and without this it will hardly ever be done. It is not good Books and Preaching that will retund a prophane humour; for ſuch perſons will either not read and hear them, or not conſider them; nor is it Prayer and Faſting too that will caſt out this deaf (but not dumb) Devil. But when good men are as bold as evil men are impudent, I mean as openly good as the other are bad, when piety is daring, and (if you will pardon the expreſſion) Hectors lewdneſs out of Countenance; then I ſay, the World will, if not grow devout, yet at leaſt grow modeſt and civil towards Religion, when vertuous men give evidence that they believe themſelves, when they demonſtrate that the Kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power; when their Principles and pretenſions appear in their Spirit, their Diſcourſes, their whole Life and Converſation, when they continually breathe of God and of Heaven.

And (to ſay no more) by this courſe alſo a man

man ſhall gain a worthy reputation and eſteem to himſelf; for whereas a baſhful, puſillanimous, complying humour, that will crouch to a debauch for fear of offence, and faulter and mince the matter of profaneneſs to curry favour with lewd men, ſhall be deſpiſed and trodden down by every body. A brave generous Aſſerter of his principles, and of God's honour, that fills the place and company where he is with the ſweet odours of Piety and Devotion, procures himſelf a veneration where ever he goes; he looks like *Moſes* when he came out of the Mount, his face ſhines and all men ſee a glory about him; inſomuch that thoſe that cannot find in their hearts to imitate him, yet cannot chuſe but reverence and admire him.

Phil. I think your mind is an inexhauſtible Fountain of Arguments on this Subject. Every occaſion affords you a freſh tide of Eloquence; either you have very much ſtudied this Point, or it is wonderfully pregnant of its own proofs: For my own part, I cannot bear up againſt you. I confeſs I thought when we firſt entred on this particular, it was impoſſible that I ſhould ever be of your opinion therein; but now I am ſo far from having any thing material to object, that I proteſt I am clearly ſatisfied that it would be a very wiſe thing, and well worthy of our endeavours to bring it into uſe and practice: I mean, as much as poſſibly we can to exclude idle Tales and Drollery out of our Converſe, or at leaſt to confine them to a narrower compaſs, and ſo to make way for this great affair of Religion.

But yet let me tell you, though you have con-

vinced me you have not ſilenced others; there are thoſe will elude the Arguments they cannot anſwer, and expoſe what they are reſolved not to comply withal: They will ſay, This talking of Religion is a Mountebank trick to impoſe upon the people, that it is a deſign of vain-glory, or an artifice to ſeem better than we are: They will tell you that ſincerely good men uſe to be modeſt and ſilent, and to enjoy their ſenſe of Piety in ſecret. In ſhort, when you have ſaid all you can to recommend this way of Converſation, they will ſay it is no better than Puritaniſm or Phanaticiſm; and having affixed ſuch a name upon it, they will run both you and it down preſently.

Sebaſt. Hearty thanks, Dear *Phil*, for putting me in mind of that danger which otherwiſe I ſhould not have been aware of. I acknowledge I am ſo far unskilled in the World, that I was apt to think it was ſufficient to a Cauſe to be back'd with good Proofs, and that when a buſineſs had recommended it ſelf to the Reaſon and Conſcience of men the work was done. I little thought men muſt be wheedled into a compliance with their own judgments, and much leſs that they would be ſo diſingenuous towards themſelves as to put a cheat upon their own ſenſes; nor did I ſufficiently conſider the power of Names to make good evil, and evil good, and that the beſt thing in the World may be run down by the mere blaſt of an odious Nick-name: Lord! what a venemous breath hath Common Fame, that it can change the nature of things? What

Godly Diſcourſe not Phanatical, nor the Badge of any Sect.

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an huge Leviathan is vulgar Opinion, that it ſhould be able to oppoſe it ſelf to the beſt reaſon of Mankind, and to God Almighty too? If this be ſo, who would exerciſe their underſtanding, or dare to propound any generous thing to the World, and not rather ſet himſelf adrift to run with the Tide.

But yet this comforts me, that it looks like a Confeſſion of the inſuperable ſtrength of my Arguments, when Men reſort to ſuch ſubterfuges: It is a ſign they dare not encounter me on the ſquare, that uſe ſuch foul play, and that men are deſtitute of reaſon when they betake themſelves to Libels and Reproaches.

Let us then reſume a little courage, it may be we ſhall conquer at laſt becauſe our Adverſaries deſpair of an honourable Victory. That which I contend for (you know) is this, That it becomes men to take all fit and fair occaſions to ſpeak worthily of God, and to make advantage of friendly converſation towards the improvement of one another in morals, as well as in ſecular or any other Concerns, and can any one be ſo abſurdly malicious as to call this Phanaticiſm? Doth that deſerve the odious Name of a Party which is the great and univerſal Concern of all Mankind? Is that to be accounted the peculiar *Shibboleth* of a Sect which ſpeaks a Good Man and a Chriſtian? Is that to be made a mark of infamy which the beſt men in the World wear as a Badge of Honour? Are we minded that this word Phanaticiſm ſhould have the power of an Oſtraciſm, and put a diſgrace upon men for being too good.

If men in their Intercourſes and Communi-

cations deliberated about ſetting forth of ſome new God, or at leaſt of ſome new Religion, there were juſt Cauſe of ſuch an odious imputation; but to take opportunity to ſpeak of the true God, and the old Religion gravely and piouſly, it cannot be that this ſhould be Puritaniſm, unleſs it be ſo to be in earneſt in Religion, which God forbid. Sure it is not the Character of any mere Sect amongſt us to love God; and if it be not, then neither can it be ſo to talk of him affectionately, ſince the latter is the eaſie and natural iſſue and expreſſion of the former. *David*, I remember, called his tongue his glory, and is that alone of all the powers of Soul and Body exempted from any part in doing honour to the Creator?

Are all men Puritans when they are ſick or upon their Death-Beds? And yet then there are very few are ſo modiſh as to wave the talk of Religion, or to talk lightly and drollingly of it. Either therefore all dying men are Sectaries or elſe they teach us then what we ought to practiſe at other times, if we be not unreaſonably careleſs and deſperate.

As for thoſe that are really Phanatick, and are continually canting in a loathſom manner of Religion, thoſe Parrots, that talk without any ſenſe or apprehenſion of what they ſay, or thoſe Ricketty Phariſees, that are all head and ears and tongue, but feeble in their hands and feet, that talk but do nothing; let theſe be called Puritans or Phanaticks, or what men pleaſe: But let no diſhonour be reflected upon thoſe that underſtand and believe what they ſay, and live up to what they believe and profeſs. For though

though it may pleaſe thoſe who have a mind to put a ſlur upon this inſtance of real Piety which I am vindicating, to confound it with that other hypocritical guiſe of it, which I have now condemned, that ſo they may expoſe it to contempt and diſhonour; yet as it is certain theſe two are as different things as ſenſe and Non-ſenſe, or as Life and Varniſh, ſo (impartial men being Judges) that very Paint and pageantry bears evidence of the excellency of that Sincerity which I am recommending. For you know men do not uſe to counterfeit that which is of no value; painted beauty is a great Argument of the deſirableneſs of that which is true and native; ſo there is certainly a very deſerved admiration of holy Diſcourſe, and a great power and charm in it, otherwiſe it would never be ſo artificially pretended to by ſuch men, nor eſpecially be ſufficient to give countenance (as we find it doth) to theſe ſiniſter purpoſes and deſigns: The World, I ſay would not be ſo ſottiſh as to be impoſed upon by religious Cant, nor deſigning Hypocrites be ſo ſilly as to go about to abuſe the World this way, if it were not an acknowledged Caſe, that there is a real worth in that which they endeavour apiſhly to imitate. So that the Objections againſt us are unanſwerable Arguments for us, and we have great aſſurance we ſhall carry our Cauſe when our very reproaches turn to our honour.

Godly Conference an effectual way to ſupplant Phanaticiſm.

But what if after all this, *Phil*, I ſhould take the boldneſs to aſſert, that ſuch holy intercourſe as I am ſpeaking of, and eſpecially under thoſe Conditions and Qualificati-

Qualifications I have put upon it, is ſo far from Phanaticiſm or Puritaniſm, or any Sectarian *Odium*, that on the contrary (if the practice of it became general amongſt good men) it would be the moſt effectual way in the World to daſh thoſe formal diſguiſes out of Countenance, and to put all Phanatical tricks out of all requeſt and reputation. This, I believe, will ſeem a Paradox to you at firſt; but I am very confident you will be of my mind when you have conſidered, That the only, or at leaſt the principal thing which that ſort of men ſupport themſelves by, is the Gift of tongue, a peculiar knack of talking religiouſly: For if you look into their lives and temper, they have no advantage of other men; and if you examine either their Principles or their Abilities, theſe will not mend the matter: and yet they have ſtrange authority and influence in the World; they charm men into ſecurity of their honeſty by their talk, they caſt a miſt before mens Eyes that they are taken for godly men, let their pride and paſſion, their covetouſneſs and ambition, be otherwiſe as palpable and notorious as they can. This Talent of talking is ſo valuable, it redeems them from ſuſpition, with this Paſs-Port they go undetected, they are Saints from the teeth outwards, and Fools admire them, and ſo they compaſs their ends.

Now were all ſincerely good men ſo ſenſible of this as they ought to be, and would they in earneſt apply themſelves to grave and ſerious and pious Diſcourſe in the habit of their Converſations, theſe Jack-Daws would be deprived of their borrowed Feathers, and thoſe crafty

crafty men would not have a Mask or Vizard left them to cheat the World withal.

You will ſay, perhaps they would outſhoot thoſe good men in their own Bow, and talk at an higher rate in Hypocriſie than the other could do in Sincerity .But for anſwer: Do but conſider whether there be not a greater power in Life than in mere ſhew and pageantry, whether that which proceeds from the thoughts and heart and Principles within be not likely to have more vigour and ſpirit than that which hath no root, no foundation; but is begotten and lives and dies between the tongue and teeth. Do not you obſerve that nothing ſo much diſparages a Picture as the preſence of him for whom it was drawn? Life hath a thouſand vigours and beauties which no hand of the Painter can reach and diſplay. So hath ſpiritual Life, when it puts forth it ſelf, a ſpirit, a warmth, an air, or whatſoever you will call it, which cannot be ſo imitated, but it will ſhame and detect the Rival. The great miſchief of the World therefore, and the only ſecurity of Hypocriſie, is, that the Truth and Life diſappears, and gives its Counterfeit the Stage intirely to act upon; but let that appear and confront its Adverſary, and Hypocriſie will be ſenſible of an unequal match, and bluſh or withdraw it ſelf. when, I ſay, men that feel the power of Religion in their own Souls will be perſwaded to expreſs themſelves habitually, manly and judiciouſly, they will baffle and confound all theatrical Pretenders to Religion. And now, *Phil*, what is become of that formidable Objection, as you and I thought it at firſt? May not we now adventure to talk of

Religion

Religion without the danger of Phanaticiſm?

Phil. Yes, I ſee clearly we may; and not only ſo, but you have now convinced me that for that very reaſon we ought to doe it, as the beſt way to ſupplant Phanaticiſm. But at the worſt, if there were ſome danger that I ſhould incur the raſh cenſure of ſome that I value, and were likely to be called Phanatick for my pains, I would not ſtick to ſerve ſo many great and excellent ends at that hazard, If I could.

Sebaſt. Bravely reſolved, my good Friend! now you ſpeak like a Man and a Chriſtian; there's the very Point of Vertue: He that is too tender and delicate hath not the courage to be good, and he that will venture nothing here will win nothing in the other World. You know my ſenſe already, that good nature is an excellent and uſeful Companion of Vertue; but as the Caſe may happen, a little moroſity is neceſſary to preſerve them both: But, I pray you why did you put an *if* at the laſt? after all, do you queſtion whether it be poſſible to diſcourſe piouſly?

Phil. No, good *Sebaſtian*, that is not it; for you have convinced me of the feſibleneſs, as well as the excellency of that kind of Converſation; but you know (as I have ſaid before) that is out of the road of Diſcourſe; and beſides the difficulty of bringing thoſe one converſes with to it, it is natural for a man to follow his old Biaſs: If I were once entered into ſuch a Communication, I am ſure I ſhould embrace it, and I think I could continue it. But there is a ſheepiſh kind of modeſty in this (as well as in other things) that checks and reſtrains a man from

from beginning that which neither he nor his Companions have been uſed to. If therefore you can help me to conquer my ſelf as well as to anſwer Objections, to overcome my temper as well as to ſubmit my judgment; I would then ſet about it as well as I could.

Sebaſt. With all my heart; only with this Condition; as well as I can (as you ſay.) But I pray, give me leave to ask you a Queſtion by the bye, and not decline that which you have put to me; the Caſe is this, It is commonly obſerved that good men find ſuch a modeſty (as you ſpeak of) to reſtrain them when they are ſetting themſelves to begin ſome good Diſcourſe; inſomuch that ſometimes with very great Difficulty (if at all) they can ſcrew themſelves up to it; but contrarywiſe, lewd and prophane men rant and hector at an intolerable rate, they will blaſpheme and burleſque Religion when they are in their humour without regard to God and man: Now ſeeing the former have all the reaſon in the World on their ſide, and the other as much againſt them, what is it that makes this difference in their ſpirit and temper?

Phil. That I may come the ſooner at the ſolution of my own difficulty, I will anſwer your Queſtion as briefly as I can; and I think it may be reſolved into theſe ſeveral Cauſes, firſt, prophane men are generally very groſly ignorant; for I cannot imagine that any thing elſe ſhould make them bold with God Almighty. And though they pretend to wit, yet a man to their own tooth hath

What makes prophane men ſo bold in their aſſaults upon Religion.

hath told us, That a certain Doſe of that thing called Wit is a neceſſary ingredient into the Compoſition of a very ridiculous Fool. And I have heard it hath been ſaid by a better Man than he, That a ſmattering in knowledge (which is the meaſure of a Wit) diſpoſes Men to Atheiſm, whereas a full proportion would carry them through to the ſenſe of God and Religion. The ſecond Cauſe I aſſign is, That theſe Men having abandoned Vertue, they have therewith loſt all good nature and civil reſpect; and are delivered up to inſolence and an affronting humour. And thirdly, I make no great doubt but the Devil, whoſe work they do, aſſiſts them in it. And now you will eaſily think there needs no other concurrence; yet I will add another, and that is Drunkenneſs: For methinks it ſhould be out of the power of the Devil himſelf to tempt a ſober Man to ſuch a Villainy; but in the rage of Drink God is defied, and every thing that is ſacred. But now to my Queſtion.

Sebaſt. Firſt, *Phil*, let me kiſs your hands for your ingenious Anſwer to my Query; and then in the ſecond place, I wiſh I could anſwer yours as well. The plain truth is (as I have acknowledged to you before) I have been in that Oven, and therefore cannot wonder to find another Man there; and though I cannot always conquer my baſhfulneſs, yet in ſuch Caſes I always endeavour it, and I will tell you by what methods, and ſo I hope the ſame remedies may relieve us both.

Firſt then when I enter into Company with deſign to engage them in good Diſcourſe, I endeavour,

deavour, if it be poſſible, to make ſome Friend privy to my Plot, who perhaps ſhall ſit at ſome diſtance from me, but underſtanding his Cue ſhall be always ready to ſecond me in what I undertake; and ſo by an honeſt Confederacy we can carry on the buſineſs. And this I do eſpecially if I apprehend the Company to conſiſt either of prophane Perſons or captious Wits. For if a modeſt Man ſhould in ſuch a Caſe begin an unuſual Diſcourſe, and have no body to follow him, he will not only miſcarry of his purpoſe, but be abaſhed and confounded. But if he have one prepared to comply with him, they ſhall both have time to recollect themſelves, and to carry the Ball of Diſcourſe whither they pleaſe.

Means to raiſe our Spirits to a fit temper for religious Communication.

In the next place, *when* I am deſtitute of the aſſiſtance of ſuch an Aſſociate to ſecond and relieve me, then if I apprehend I have an opportunity of diſcourſing uſefully, I reſolve to begin whatever come of it, that is, I forcibly break ſilence, though it be with trembling and paleneſs and faultering and without any well-contrived expreſſions: And when once the Ice is broken the worſt is paſt, then preſently my colour and ſpeech and ſpirits will return again. For to proceed is very eaſie then, becauſe, as I have noted before, the Objects of Religion lie ſo ready to a mans thoughts that he cannot be at a loſs in the Sequel of his Diſcourſe.

In order hereto I endeavour to raiſe in my own heart a great zeal of God's Glory, and a generous deſign of doing good to thoſe I converſe with.

with. And therefore I think with my ſelf I am not only to ſtand upon my guard and ſecure my ſelf from infection, nor much leſs to be a mere Negative, and content my ſelf to do no hurt to my Acquaintance, but that it is expected from me I ſhould benefit them, and ſeaſon their intercourſe with ſomething vertuous and graceful.

Moreover, I endeavour in the whole Conduct of my ſelf, and the habit of my life, to arrive at a ſerioufneſs of ſpirit and a deepneſs of thought, without which neither ſhall I be in temper to begin or carry on any ſuch weighty Diſcourſe with others, nor will they expect it from me; a light trifling jeſting Spirit is good for nothing but ſport and may-game. Such as can ordinarily find in their hearts to ſtep aſide to a quibble or a clinch, are generally men ſo unfit for Religion, that they are ſeldom uſeful to themſelves in any ſecular buſineſs: But a ſerious man hath his thoughts about him, and his very mein and countenance raiſes the expectation of the Company, and ſo they are half prepared to receive his impreſſion. Now to bring my ſelf to this temper, I often repreſent to my ſelf God's Omnipreſence, and that I am before a mighty, wiſe and moſt reverend Majeſty, who takes notice of all my carriage and demeanour. I think frequently of the Judgment to come and the wonderful accuracy and ſolemnity of it, of the unſpeakable concerns of Hell and Heaven, and the whole affair of another World. By theſe Conſiderations I curb the levity and wantonneſs of my ſpirit, and ſo become both furniſhed with fit thoughts to communicate,

municate, and alſo with a proper temper to communicate them.

Beſides this, I make it my earneſt endeavour to be as much above the World as I can, I mean to have as indifferent an eſteem of Riches and Fame, *&c.* as is poſſible, that my heart may not eagerly and intently run upon them: For I find by woful experience, that whenſoever it warps that way, I am ſure to be liſtleſs and formal in any ſuch enterprize as we are ſpeaking of; but whenſoever I can contemn them, then I am as it were all ſpirit, and have ſo lively impreſſes of another World upon me, that I can almoſt make it viſible to my Companions.

Amongſt all theſe I pray daily and earneſtly for God's Grace and Aſſiſtance, that he will every where be preſent to me by his Holy Spirit, and put uſeful thoughts into my heart, and give me courage to expreſs them, ſo as to beget the like in others.

This, Sir, is the method I take with my ſelf; and having, I thank God, often ſucceeded well with it againſt a Cowardly heart of my own, I cannot but expect it will have greater and more ſignal effects upon you.

Phil. God verifie the Omen. However, I thank you moſt heartily for the Receipt, which I will keep as long as I live.

Sebaſt. But, I pray, Good *Phil*, do not make it publick: for though I envy no Body the benefit of my Experience, yet I would be loth the World ſhould know what a ſhameful Diſeaſe I have been ſick of.

Phil. O Sir, timidity is but a natural infirmity, and hath not much ſhame attending it: But

I muſt tell you, as my Confeſſor or Phyſician, which you will, of another Diſeaſe I labour under, ſo ſhameful and ſcandalous, that ſcarce any Body will own it, and that is Ignorance; if I had courage enough for the buſineſs (we have all this while been ſpeaking of) yet I am afraid by my unskilfulneſs I ſhall ſpoil all: let me therefore pray you to afford me your advice in this Caſe alſo.

Sebaſt. Fear it not, *Phil*, a Man of your cheerful countenance, ſprightly vigour, and benignity of temper, can never labour under any ſuch Diſeaſe.

Phil. Good *Sebaſtian* be not too ſecure of me; for this is a buſineſs of that nature, that unleſs it be done gracefully it had better be let alone, and eſpecially becauſe the Enterprize is ſomewhat new and unuſual; therefore the greater dexterity and management is required, to give it a good appearance at its ſetting out, and ſo to lay a foundation for its coming into common uſe and reputation: and beſides, it concerns you in point of your own credit to furniſh me out well, for ſeeing it is you only that have put me upon it, the diſhonour will redound to you, if I miſcarry in the undertaking.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, Sir, and without a Complement, you are known to be a Man of ſo good Parts that you can never want Materials, and then your ſweetneſs of addreſs will not fail to give great advantage and acceptation to your Diſcourſes. Now it is an hard thing, that becauſe you are pleaſed to think me Wiſe, therefore I muſt ſhew my ſelf to be a Fool; but that's a ſmall matter between Friends: Therefore ſince you

you will have it ſo, I will tell you the effect of my Obſervation in this matter.

Prudential advices about religious Conference.

And the firſt thing to our purpoſe which I remark is, the Example of our Saviour (and who can we better learn of?) And he, I obſerve, had a dexterity of applying every accidental occurrence to his holy Purpoſes, as it were by a kind of Chymiſtry ſeparating the groſs Matter, and ſubliming ordinary Affairs to Heavenly Doctrine: Inſomuch, that there was ſcarcely any common Affair of Life, ſuch as Eating or Drinking, or Recreation, no Diſeaſe or Infirmity of the Body, no Trade and Occupation, ſuch as Merchandize or Husbandry, no Building or Planting, Plowing or Sowing, nay not ſo mean Employments as Womens leavening their Bread, grinding at the Mill, or ſweeping an Houſe, but he Spiritualized them and applied them to his deſigns.

Now if we would learn of him, and endeavour to imitate this dexterity, we might with great eaſe, and without all violence ſurprize men into Religion: and not only at every turn introduce pious Diſcourſe, but render the ſubject of it intelligible to the meaneſt Capacities, and withal by thoſe ſenſible reſemblances give ſuch lively touches upon the minds of Men, as that what we delivered upon thoſe occaſions would ſtick and remain with them.

And there is no great pains or skill required for the doing of this, the principal requiſite to it is a zeal of God's Glory, and ſuch a conſtant and fixt Eye upon it as ſhall make us apprehenſive of the opportunities that preſent themſelves,

ſelves and then a little humility to condeſcend to the weakneſs of People; which two things preſuppoſed, a very ſmall exerciſe of fancy would draw the Parallels, and make the application, as any Man will quickly find that will ſet himſelf about it.

As for inſtance, when we viſit a ſick Friend or Neighbour, what a fair opportunity have we to diſcourſe of the Immortality of the Soul, and what an eaſie tranſition is it from a Phyſician to a Saviour? Or why may we not as well cheer up our afflicted Friend with the comforts of Religion, as well as amuze or divert him with impertinent Stories? Or ſuppoſe Friends be together, and diſpoſed to be merry, why may not ſome word come in ſeaſonably of the Everlaſting Friendſhips in Heaven, or of the continual Feaſt of a good Conſcience? Why may not the common Chat about News be elevated to the conſideration of the good tidings of the Goſpel? What hinders but our Diſhes of Meat may be ſeaſoned with a gracious word or two about the Food of our Souls? When Men are talking of Old Age, it would be no great ſtrain if thence our thoughts riſe up to Eternal Life. Nor any great flight of fancy is requiſite to improve all the accidents of our lives to the contemplation of Divine Providence, which orders and governs them. In a word, every thing is capable of improvement if we be not wanting; we ſhall never want opportunity if we embrace it; any thing will ſerve an intent Mind and a devout Heart to theſe purpoſes.

My ſecond remark is, upon the Cuſtom of thoſe ſeveral Perſons in the Goſpel, that upon divers

divers occaſions entred into Conference with our Saviour, which I note they always began by way of Queſtion or Doubt, as Men deſirous to be informed, rather than affecting to teach or dictate. This was not only the way of *Nicodemus*, *Joh.* iij. of the Woman of *Samaria*, *Joh.* iv. and of the young Rich Man, *Matth.* xix. who came in earneſt to be inſtructed; but of the Scribes and Phariſees and Sadducees, who came to diſpute: And indeed I have heard, this modeſt way of propounding a Queſtion, and expecting and replying to the Anſwer, was the old way of Diſputation. And certainly this is of great uſe in our Caſe, for the more eaſie and acceptable introduction of the ſerious matters of Religion into ordinary Converſation. When we do not violently break in upon the Company, but civily make our way; not abruptly obtrude our Sentiments, but inſinuate them; not malapertly reprove other Mens Errors, or ſupercilioufly dictate our own Opinions; not fall upon Preaching, or throw down our Gauntlet, and challenge the Company to a Combate: But modeſtly appear in the Garb of Learners, and propound a Caſe, as to Men wiſer than our ſelves, for our own ſatisfaction. This courſe, inſtead of offending exceedingly obliges thoſe we apply our ſelves to; foraſmuch as every Man is glad to be accounted Wiſe and fit to be conſulted with.

As ſuppoſe you ſhould ask the Perſons you are with, what they think of ſuch or ſuch an Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, or for the proof of a particular Providence; or ask their advice how to anſwer ſuch an Objection

that comes in your way againſt either of thoſe, or any other fundamental Point of Religion: And though ſuch Queſtions may at firſt ſeem merely ſpeculative, yet if they be purſued wiſely and with that intention, they will infallibly lead to practice.

Or ſuppoſe you put a Caſe about Temperance, as namely, What are the Rules and Meaſures of Sobriety, ſo as alſo to avoid ſcrupuloſity; How far is Worldly care evil and vicious, and how far innocent and allowable; What is the predicament of careleſneſs and common Swearing, and what kind of ſins it is reducible to.

Or more generally, How a Man may diſcern his own proficiency in Vertue, and what preparation of a Man's ſelf is ſtatly neceſſary againſt the uncertainty of Life, and to ſecure the great ſtake of an intereſt in another World.

Or, to name no more, What the Company thinks of ſuch or ſuch a paſſage in a Sermon you lately heard, or in ſuch a Book. Theſe and a thouſand more ſuch eaſie inlets there are into good Diſcourſe without imputation of pragmaticalneſs, and which a little preſence of mind will improve to what purpoſes we deſire.

Another thing that I have obſerved in order to this Affair is, what I have learned from the Cuſtome of prudent Men, to inſinuate that by a Story which would not be ſo well received if it were directly and bluntly delivered. Telling of Stories, you know, is a common Theme of Converſation, and if a Man have any graceful way of telling them, and eſpecially uſe any prudence in the choice of them; he hath the Com-

pany

pany in his power, and may lead them to what Diſcourſe he will. And beſides, Men will admit of that to be ſaid in the third Perſon which they will not bear in the ſecond.

Now to this purpoſe ſuppoſe a Man ſhould have in readineſs a Story of ſome remarkable Judgment of God upon ſome notorious Sin, that he would by no means deterr thoſe he converſes with from, no body could take offence at the Story, and yet every Man's Conſcience would make application of it. Or ſuppoſe a Man ſhould in lively Colours deſcribe ſome excellent Perſon, he would not only put all the Hearers into the thoughts of thoſe Vertues that were ſo deſcribed; but ſtir up jointly a modeſt ſhame in them for their own ſhortneſs, and an Emulation of ſo brave an Example. But to be ſure he ſhall hereby give himſelf an Introduction (without affectation) of diſcourſing of which ſoever of thoſe eminent Vertues he pleaſes. Theſe and many ſuch other ways there are, which your own Prudence and Obſervation will repreſent to you better than I can; by which a diſcreet Perſon may engage any Company (in which it is fit for an honeſt Man to be found) in good Diſcourſe.

But I will not omit upon this occaſion to tell you a Story, which I have from very good hands, of two very eminent Men, both for Learning and Piety, in the laſt Age (or rather the beginning of the preſent) the one of them a great Prelate (indeed a Primate) and the other a Church-man of great Note and Preferment. Theſe two great Men, as they often met together to conſult the Intereſt of Learning, and the Affairs of the Church, ſo when they had diſ-

patched that, they ſeldom parted from one another without ſuch an encounter as this: Come, Good Doctor (ſaith the Biſhop) let us now talk a little of Jeſus Chriſt; Or, on the other ſide, ſaid the Doctor, Come, my Lord, let me hear your Grace ſpeak of the goodneſs of God with your wonted Piety and Eloquence; let us warm one anothers Hearts with Heaven, that we may the better bear this cold World. I cannot tell you the words that paſſed between them, nor can you expect it from me; but I am ſufficiently aſſured of the Matter of Fact. And this they performed with that holy reverence and ardent zeal, with that delightful ſenſe and feeling, that afforded matter of admiration to thoſe of their Friends or Servants that happened to be preſent, or to over-hear them. Here is now an Example of holy Conference without a Preface, and yet without exception; a Precedent not only juſtifying all I have ſaid, but eaſie to imitate where-ever there is a like Spirit of Piety: a few ſuch Men would put profaneneſs out of Countenance, and turn the tide of Converſation.

Phil. Shall I crave of you to tell me the names of thoſe two Perſons?

Sebaſt. Their names are ſo well known, that I think you might ſpare the Queſtion; but they were *U*——— and *P*———

Phil. I gueſs who you mean, and I would to God there were more of them. I doubt I ſhall never be able to imitate, but I am reſolved to write after ſo fair a Copy as well as I can: therefore I pray you, if you have any further directions for the guiding of my hand, let me have them.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. I ſee you are in earneſt; God's Bleſſing on your heart for it. All that I have to ſay, or (as I think) can be ſaid more, may be ſummed up in theſe four following Cautions:

First, You muſt remember that (which was ſaid before) you are not always to be endeavouring a Diſcourſe of Religion; other Diſcourſe, ſo it be manly and pertinent, is not only lawful, but neceſſary in its ſeaſon. The wiſe Man tells us there is a time for all things; to over-doe is to doe nothing to the purpoſe; and to exclude all other innocent and ingenious Converſe for the ſake of Religion, is to make Religion irkſome, and the certain way to ſhut it quite out of the World.

Secondly, Becauſe religious Conference is not always a Duty, therefore it is a peculiar ſeaſon and opportunity that makes it at any time become ſo, and conſequently that is to be watched and laid hold upon. My meaning is, that when Men are in drink or in paſſion, it is no fit time to enter on this Subject, for it will be but to caſt Pearls before Swine; it can do thoſe perſons no good at ſuch times, and it may do us hurt and Religion too. But when Men are in the calmeſt and ſobereſt Moods, then is the only time for this intercourſe.

Thirdly, It is very adviſeable that we make a diſtinction of Perſons, as well as times, for this buſineſs. You know the World is not all of a ſize, ſome are our Superiors, others are our Inferiors or Equals; there are ſome very acute and learned Men, ſome dull and ignorant; ſome are captious, others ſincere and plain-hearted; ſome profane, and others pious; in a word, there

are

are old and young, rich and poor, cheerful and melancholy, and abundance other ſuch differences in Mens circumſtances: All which require a peculiar Addreſs, if we intend to faſten any good thing upon them. But of this I need ſay no more, knowing to whom I ſpeak.

Again, fourthly, it is a matter of Prudence that our Eſſays of this kind be rather perfective, than deſtructive; that is, that we do not take upon us authoritatively to quaſh and controll other Diſcourſe, but rather take advantage of any occaſional paſſages and hints, from whence to improve and raiſe it inſenſibly to that we would be at.

Laſtly, That out of indulgence to the levity, and in compliance with the curioſity of Mens minds, we ſhould not always harp upon one String; but ſometimes deſignedly lay aſide our buſineſs, and then reſume it again, as in Muſick to ſing and let fall a Note, and by and by get it up again; that by ſuch variety we may afford the more delightful Entertainment to thoſe that are our Companions. And now, I doubt, I have quite tired you; therefore it is time to bid you a good Night.

Phil. Dear *Sebaſtian*, ſhall I tell you a plain truth? When we firſt came together this Evening, your Converſation methought was ſo much out of the Mode, that though I conſidered you as an honeſt Gentleman, yet I ſuſpected I ſhould have uneaſie Company with you: But now I fanſie you are like ſome of thoſe old ſtately Buildings I have ſeen, which are a little rough and weather-beaten without, but for all that are ſubſtantially ſtrong, and expreſs very admirable

rable Art within; or, as I have heard it was ſaid of *Socrates*, that he was like Apothecaries Boxes, that had the Picture of an Ape, a Satyr, or perhaps a Serpent, without ſide, but contained excellent Medicaments: So you, that I feared would be my Diſeaſe, have been my Phyſician; and, which is more, have ſet me up for one too.

Sebaſt. Nay then good Night again, if you be for Complements: But if you have any real value for me, I hope you will now doe me the favour of your Company at my Houſe ſome other Evening.

Phil. Never doubt it, Sir, your dead Men ſhall ſcarcely haunt you more than I will do. But good Night heartily.

The End of the Firſt Conference.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE.

PART II.

Prov. xxvij. 17.

As Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo doth the countenance of a Man his friend.

1 Cor. xv. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

A Winter-Evening CONFERENCE AT *SEBASTIAN*'s Houſe.

PART II.

The ARGUMENT of the Second CONFERENCE.

In the former Conference, Sebaſtian *having convinced* Philander *of the great importance of Religion, and the Wiſdom of making it as well the Subject of Social Communication as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpoſe this ſecond time to confer about it. But* Biophilus, *a ſceptical Perſon, being in their Company, he at firſt diverts them from their deſign by other Diſcourſe; till after a-while, under the diſguiſe of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the Proof of thoſe Principles which they would have ſuppoſed. Upon this occaſion the Foundations of Religion are ſearched into, and particularly that great Point concerning* A Judgment to come, *is ſubſtantially proved: which*

Which being done, and Biophilus *thereby rendred ſomewhat more inclinable to be ſerious, they then purſue their firſt intentions, and diſcourſe warmly and ſenſibly of another World, and of the neceſſary Preparations for it, ſo long till they not only inflame their own Hearts with Devotion, but ſtrike ſome ſparks of it into* Biophilus *alſo.*

Philander. YOU ſee, *Sebaſtian*, I am as good as my promiſe; and at this time ſo much better, as I have brought my Neighbour *Biophilus* along with me.

Sebaſt. I always took you for a Man of your word; but now you have not only acquitted your ſelf, but obliged me.

Biophilus. Your humble Servant, Good *Sebaſtian*: I know you are a ſtudious Perſon; yet I thought Company would not be unacceptable to you, at this Seaſon.

Sebaſt. You are heartily welcome, Sir: I love my Books well, but my Friends better. Come, Gentlemen, will it pleaſe you to draw near the Fire? the Weather is very ſharp ſtill.

Phil. The cold continues: But, thanks be to God, the Evenings are not ſo tedious ſince I ſaw you laſt.

Bioph. How can that be, *Philander*? The Weather indeed may change on a ſudden, and become colder or warmer upon ſeveral accidents; but ſeeing the Sun keeps his conſtant Courſe, the *interim* of a few days can make no diſcernible difference in the length or ſhortneſs of the Evenings.

Phil. O but here is a Friend hath taught me an Art for that, a way to make time long or ſhorter

ſhorter at pleaſure, nay (which perhaps will encreaſe your wonder) both theſe ſeeming Contraries ſhall be coincident. A Man ſhall have more time to ſpend, and leſs to ſpare; more for his uſe and pleaſure, and none to be a burden to him.

Of improvement of time.

Bioph. Can Art do that? That is a noble skill indeed, (if it be poſſible) to ſhorten a Man's time, and yet prolong his Life. Sure you ſpeak Riddles; however, I pray, make me Partaker of the myſtery.

Phil. Good Neighbour, there is no other Secret in it but this: Good Company and profitable Converſation redeem time from folly and impertinency, and ſo we really live longer, and they alſo ſpend the time very pleaſantly, and ſo our lives ſeem to be the ſhorter.

Bioph. That's pritty, I confeſs, but I had rather it had been literally true.

Sebaſt. I believe *Biophilus* remembers a Proverbial Saying they have in *Italy* to this purpoſe, *He that would have a ſhort Lent, let him borrow Money to be repaid at Eaſter.* So he that forecaſts the Account which every Man muſt one day make, how he hath expended the time of this Life, will not be apt to think the term of it to be overlong. And he on the other ſide who improves his time as he ought, and hath his Accounts in readineſs, will not think the Day of reckoning too ſoon or ſudden.

Bioph. Very good again: But nevertheleſs, with your pardon, Gentlemen, I ſhould argue the quite contrary from your Premiſes. For if there be a Judgment to come (as you are pleaſed to

A touch of Epicurean Doctrine.

ſuppoſe) and that a man muſt render an account of all his actions another day; This, methinks, ſhould curdle all his delights, and the very thoughts of ſuch a thing filling him with perpetual fears and ſollicitude about it, muſt needs make Life very tedious to him. But if there be no ſuch thing to be feared hereafter, then Life will ſeem ſhort, becauſe it will be ſweet and comfortable: and then alſo a man ſhall in effect live a great while in a little time, when there is nothing to diſturb his thoughts, to impeach his pleaſures or interrupt the enjoyment of himſelf.

Phil. Yes, even in the Caſe which you put, Death will be ſure to come ſhortly, and that will ſpoil his ſport.

Bioph. that is very true and very ſad: If therefore you could find out a remedy for that you would do ſomething to purpoſe. But whereas you cannot but obſerve that there are ſeveral ſorts of Brute Creatures that out-live Mankind, (I mean though they know not what it is to live, yet) they continue longer in the World, and have as well a quicker ſenſe of pleaſure, as a more unlimited and uncontrolled enjoyment of it; in both which reſpects we have too great cauſe to envy their happineſs. If Mankind after all this muſt be perpetually tormented too with ſuſpicions of what may come after, they are doubly miſerable, and under the hardeſt fate of all Creatures.

Sebaſt. That very thing which you now obſerve, is to me a very great Argument of what you oppoſe. For upon thoſe very conſiderations, *viz.* that the Life of man in this World is ſhorter than that of ſome other leſs conſiderable Creatures,

Creatures, and that the pleaſure thereof is interrupted alſo by the expectation of the future; upon thoſe very grounds (ſay I) there is great reaſon to believe that there is ſuch a thing as another World wherein he may have amends made him for whatever was amiſs or defective here. For it is not credible with me that ſuch power and wiſdom as is plainly diſplay'd in the Conſtitution of Man, ſhould be ſo utterly deſtitute of Goodneſs, as to contrive things ſo ill, that the nobleſt Being ſhould be finally the moſt unfortunate.

To which I muſt add, that therefore the apprehenſion of ſuch a Judgment to come as we ſpeak of, neither is nor can be mere matter of dread and horrour, (as you ſeem to ſuppoſe) but is either terrible or comfortable, reſpectively to Mens preparations for it: I cannot wonder if the thoughts of it do ſo fright and diſcompoſe evil Men, ſo that they could with all their hearts wiſh there was no ſuch thing. But moſt certainly to wiſe and vertuous Men, it is ſo far from being formidable, that contrariwiſe the hope of it is the very joy of their hearts, the ſupport of their Spirits, their greateſt ſecurity againſt all the croſs accidents of this World, and in a word their Port and Sanctuary.

Of the different proſpects different men have of the other World.

Bioph. Theſe are fine ſayings, *Sebaſtian*; but when you have ſaid all you can, and made the beſt of the Caſe, when it comes to the proof, I do not find men in love with dying, nor to have ſo comfortable an opinion of that other World you ſpeak of; but that they could with all their hearts be content to quit their intereſt

tereſt in the latter, ſo they might put off the former. I remember once when I was preſent at an Execution, amongſt the reſt of condemned Malefactors, there was one who either was ſo ſecure of his own Innocency, or ſo confident of the ſufficiency of his preparations for Death, or, which I rather ſuſpect, ſo elevated and tranſpo rted with the Harangues of the Prieſt, that he ſeemed to long for his near approaching end, and pretended he would not exchange his condition for that of any of the Spectators there preſent: But by and by comes the ſurprizing News of a Pardon or Reprieve, and the poor Man was ready to leap out of his skin for joy.

And I have often obſerved Men, who when they have been deſperately ſick, and paſt all hopes of Life, then (as it is uſual with Men in danger of drowning to catch hold of any thing that offers it ſelf for their ſupport) to ſet a good face on the matter, and (as we ſay) make a Vertue of Neceſſity, and welcome the approach of Death with ſeeming courage and conſtancy: But in this juncture, let but a Phyſician appear that gives them any hopes of Recovery, they preſently ſtart back from the brink of another World, as from an horrible Precipice, and ſmile upon the Meſſenger that brings the good tidings of Life. I cannot ſee therefore that Men do indeed believe themſelves in this matter.

Sebaſt. There is no doubt, *Biophilus*, but that (as you ſay) ſome Men may talk only, and ſet a good face upon that which they have no comfortable ſenſe of. And no wonder if ſuch Mens courage fails them when they have moſt uſe of it: for it is not imaginable that it ſhould

ſhould be eaſie to brazen it out againſt Death. But this is no more reproach to true Faith in God and hopes of another World, than it is to generous Courage and Valour, that now and then you ſhall ſee an huffing ſwaggering Hector turn recreant when he is put to it in earneſt. It is acknowledged to be very eaſie to brag and vapour when no danger is near; but it requires real bravery to ſtand to it when a Man is briskly encountered: Now as you will not ſay there is no ſuch thing as Valour, becauſe there are ſome Cowards that pretend to it; ſo neither (I preſume) will you think fit to ſuppoſe there is no Faith, becauſe there is ſome Hypocriſie.

Beſides, if you were as well ſatisfied as I am or pretend to be of the truth of that we are diſcourſing upon, namely, of another World; yet your experience of the common courſe of Mens lives would force you to acknowledge, that even amongſt thoſe that do profeſs to believe ſuch a thing, there are but very few who appear to be habitually well prepared for ſo great a Tryal; and therefore no wonder if ſuch Perſons be ſomewhat ſtartled and diſcompoſed at an immediate Summons, and could be very glad to have further day given them to make up ſo great an Account. For however a tolerable courſe of living may make a ſhift to ſupport a Man's hopes whilſt Death is looked upon at a diſtance; yet when it comes to the Point, that a Man muſt die indeed, it is very reaſonable to expect that ſuch Men we now ſpeak of ſhould be not a little ſolicitous in ſuch a concern, where they know the miſcarriage is fatal, and the beſt proviſion poſſible will be little enough.

But notwithſtanding all this, there are certainly, and have been ſundry Perſons in the World, who though they have had the ſame natural affection to themſelves, and to the preſent life with others, yet have as heartily wiſhed and longed for the Great Day, as it was lawful for them to doe. They know it is their Duty to maintain the ſtation God hath ſet them in, till they have a fair diſmiſſion; but bating that conſideration, I doubt not but many a Good Man would ſue out his *Quietus eſt*, and gladly embrace an opportunity of bidding farewel to the World.

Eioph. You ſay well; but how ſhall this Caſe be decided? Where may a Man find any ſuch Perſon as you ſpeak of?

Heroes that can deſpiſe Death.

Sebaſt. Perhaps you have not heard any Man ſing his *Nunc dimittis*; or if you had, it may be you would not have believed him to be in earneſt: But what think you of St. *Paul*, who profeſſes *he deſires to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt?* And particularly, 2 *Tim.* iv. 7. he foreſees a violent Death approaching him, and upon that occaſion he by way of Contemplation places himſelf, as it were, upon a Promontory, where he could look backward and forward, and take a view of both Worlds; and when he reflects upon that which he was leaving, he finds that he had diſcharged his part well and worthily, whilſt he was in it; *I have fought the good fight* (ſaith he) *I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith.* But then when he looks forward, and takes a proſpect of what was to come, here he triumphs and exults with joy, *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of righteouſneſs, which God*

God the righteous judge ſhall give me: As if he ſaid, " I know no cauſe that I ſhould ei-
" ther be aſhamed to live, or afraid to die; I
" have no reaſon to be very fond of life,
" who have met with ſo many afflictions in it,
" yet I that have born them ſo undauntedly hi-
" therto, can have as little reaſon to leave the
" World now in a pet of impatience: But
" upon the whole matter, I ſee great advan-
" tage on the other ſide, and the other World
" is as much better than the preſent, as Har-
" veſt is than Labour, as Victory than Battle,
" and as being at home than in Travel and on a
" Journey.

Or what do you think of ſo many Thouſand Martyrs, who have not onely gone out of the World with Smiles in their Faces, and Songs in their Mouths, but have choſen Death when they might have lived as freely, as happily, and as long as other Men: They were not worn out with Age, nor vexed and wearied with Poverty, nor diſtracted by any diſaſter; they had as tender and ſenſible Conſtitutions as other Men, as much natural affection to themſelves, and as ſound reaſon to judge what was beſt, and yet deſpiſed the preſent Life and World in compariſon of that to come.

Bioph. Nay, as for thoſe Men of old, which you ſpeak of, I cannot tell what to make of them: But I would fain ſee ſuch a Man now.

Sebaſt. I make no Queſtion but I could direct you to ſuch Men now; but it may be you will not believe they deſpiſe Death, becauſe you ſee them yet living; however, what think you of the Man that hath the bravery to deny himſelf thoſe profits and pleaſures which other Men al-

low themſelves, (ſo long as they ſee no infamy or external danger attend them) what think you of the Man that dares to be vertuous in a lewd Age and in evil Company, and hath the courage and proweſs to confront a whole World with his Example? What think you of the Man that ſits ſo looſe to the World, that he can bear Proſperity without being ſupercilious, and Adverſity without being dejected; that can be in want without repining, and can be liberal without upbraiding? Or, to ſay no more, What think you of the Man that ſcorns to crouch and ſneak, and paraſitically to humour and flatter others for his ſecular intereſt or ſecurity? Such Men as theſe are to be found in the preſent Age; and where-ever you find any ſuch Man, aſſure your ſelf there is a Perſon that believes himſelf, or rather that believes in God, and hath as real a perſuaſion of the World to come, as other Men have of that which they ſee with their Eyes, and touch with their Fingers.

Bioph. I believe there are ſome ſuch Men as you ſpeak of, and I do account them brave and worthy perſons; but theſe inſtances come not up to the Point, foraſmuch as ſome of theſe will quail at the approach of Death as well as other Men.

Sebaſt. It may happen ſo, that a vertuous Man may be a little diſcompoſed at the rude aſſaults of Death, and yet without any blemiſh either to his Faith or Vertue: For in the firſt place, you know all Men have a natural love of Life, and an abhorrence of Death, and from hence may proceed ſome ſudden reluctances, becauſe it is neither within the power of reaſon, nor is it the Office of Religion, utterly to extermi-

nate

mit and extinguish these first motions; but to subdue and govern them, so as that a Man may (after some conflict) pursue the choice of his mind notwithstanding them, and this latter you shall see them perform.

And then besides, you know there are some Men of more timerous natures than others, insomuch that a great measure of Vertue will not do the same thing in such, as a lesser proportion, assisted by hardiness of temper, will do in others. For Nature will be Nature still; and therefore you shall observe that even amongst those that have no apprehension of any thing to come after Death (if we may believe themselves) and so consequently can have no cause of fear; yet will be found those that are as timorous as those that expect a Judgment to come, witness your Friend Mr. *H.*

Moreover, you cannot but be aware that a violent Disease, or Pain, or any of those Forerunners of Death, do ordinarily infeeble the Operations of the Mind, as well as of the Body, and disorder Mens Reason so, that it is hard to pronounce of Mens prowess by the Combat they then maintain; therefore the surest way of deciding this matter is, that which I directed you to before; namely, when you see a Man in his full strength, voluntarily and understandingly, do that which will certainly draw Death after it, this hath certainly more bravery and self-denial in it, more contempt of Life and the World, and more argument of hopes in another World, than can be drawn from the contingencies in the very agony of Death.

Bioph. Well, perhaps it may be so: But for God's sake, Gentlemen, let us wave this uncomfor-

Of News; and News-mongers expoſed.

comfortable Subject. Come, what good News is there ſtirring?

Phil. O Sir, that is a prohibited Commodity you enquire for, neither of us deal in it.

Bioph. Nay, truly for my part, I wiſh it had been prohibited ſooner; for there hath been ſo much Knavery and Sophiſtication in it, that ſeveral well meaning Men have been cheated of their Peace, their Loyalty, and almoſt out of their Wits too by it.

But ſo long as we are not bound to believe all that we hear, we may hear what Men talk of, for our diverſion.

Sebaſt. Hearing and telling of News ſeems to me to be juſt ſuch another diverſion as tipling is. And it is much the ſame thing whether a Man's Head be full of Vapours, or of Proclamation; Wind in the Brain makes Men giddy as well as Wine, and Men reel and ſtagger to and fro as unſeemly by the impulſe of uncertain rumours, as thoſe that are intoxicated with the ſtrongeſt Liquors. Beſides, juſt as he that knows not how to entertain himſelf at home, uſually applies himſelf to the Tavern or the Ale-houſe for his relief; ſo it is the cuſtome of idle People, and ſuch as are negligent of their own Affairs, to buſie themſelves in matters that do not belong to them: And there is yet another thing worſe than all this, namely, whereas the Tavern Drunkard ſleeps and evaporates his Wine, and comes to himſelf again, the Coffee-houſe Drunkard ſcarcely ever clearly diſpels thoſe Vapours of News that have filled his Crown.

Bioph. That is ſmartly ſpoken: But however a Man

a Man ſhall look like a Male-content with the times, or at leaſt will ſeem to be unconcerned for his Countrey, that wholly diſregards News.

Sebaſt. With reverence to publick Opinion, I ſhould think the quite contrary in both Particulars. For in the firſt place, it is notorious that the Male-content is always liſtening after novelty, and I cannot tell whether his head be fuller of little Stories, or of Maggots; whereas the Man in good humour and contented, minds only his own buſineſs, and lets it alone to God and the King to govern the World.

And then for the other Particular, it is the eaſieſt thing in the World to obſerve that your right News-monger cares not a ruſh which end goes forward, or whether the ſtate of things be good or bad for his Country, ſo there be News for his own entertainment.

But after all, now I think better of it, I have a very remarkable Story to tell you: But you are ſo great a Critick you will believe nothing, and therefore I had as good hold my peace.

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebaſtian*, let us have it: You are a Perſon of good Intelligence, if you will pleaſe to communicate.

Sebaſtian's *ſtrange News of a New-found-land.*

Sebaſt. It is ſo very ſtrange and wonderful News, that I ſuſpect your Faith; but yet it is ſuch as puts me almoſt into an Ecſtacy every time I think upon it.

Bioph. Do not tantalize us with expectation, whilſt you raiſe the value of your Story, nor tempt our fancies to anticipate and deflower it.

Sebaſt. Why then it is the diſcovery and deſcription of a certain Country, which is (by relation)

lation) the very Garden and Paradiſe of the whole World, ſo tranſcendently admirable, that *Italy*, *Theſſaly*, or whatſoever you have ſeen or heard of in all your life, is nothing to it.

Bioph. Puh! Who would have expected Foreign News after ſuch a Preface? and all but ſome Iſland of Pines, I warrant you! Or ſuppoſe it ſhould be true, what can it be to us? however, go on *Sebaſtian*, perhaps it may afford us ſome diverſion.

Sebaſt. I preſaged what entertainment my News would have with you: What can it be to us, ſay you? Why, when you underſtand all, you will bleſs your ſelf that there is ſuch a place in the World, which you may go to if you pleaſe, where you may find retreat from all troubles at home, and be happy beyond imagination; nay, let me tell you, you muſt, you will go to it if you love your ſelf.

Bioph. You ſpeak at a ſtrange rate, *Sebaſtian*, a Man would think you were either ſtrangely impoſed upon your ſelf, or elſe that you had very mean apprehenſions of our diſcretion: But let it ſuffice to ſay, That, ſoberly ſpeaking, there is no Country upon the face of the Earth can deſerve this *Encomium*; beſides, when all is ſaid that can be ſaid, every Man's own home is his beſt Country.

Sebaſt. Why, do you not underſtand me? This which I am ſpeaking of, is, or will be your home too, at leaſt if you will but take the pains to travel thither.

Bioph. I marry, thank you for that; but I wiſt it is better to believe than to go look in this Caſe. What! change my Native Country, tranſplant my ſelf at theſe years! No, I am

am too old, and have taken too deep root where I am for that.

Phil. Aſſure your ſelf, *Biophilus*, there is ſomething extraordinary that *Sebaſtian* expreſſes himſelf thus; He is no Hypochondriack nor whimſical Enthuſiaſt, but a Man of the dryeſt and beſt tempered underſtanding.

Bioph. I have always thought no leſs, which raiſes my wonder now: Come, pray you, *Sebaſtian*, tell us plainly what you have to ſay upon good Grounds concerning this place which you are in ſuch a rapture about.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, Sir, I have to ſay all that is poſſible to be ſaid, and much more than I can expreſs.

Bioph. So it ſeems; for I perceive you are ſo full of it, you cannot vent your ſelf; we muſt therefore broach you by degrees. In the firſt place let me ask you, what is the Name of this ſtrange Country.

Sebaſt. It is called *Urania.*

Bioph. A Romantick Name! But, I pray, you, in what Longitude and Latitude is it ſituate, that a Man may know where to find it, if he ſhould have a mind to go thither?

An Allegorical Deſcription of the new Country.

Sebaſt. I am not skilful in that kind of Learning, neither do I remember that it was told Men in thoſe terms how the Country lies, but perhaps this may tend to your ſatisfaction; I am aſſured that they have no night or darkneſs there, for the Sun never goes off their Horizon, nor are there any long Evenings and tedious Nights which we complain of in *England*; by this Character I ſuppoſe you may gueſs at the Latitude of the place.

Bioph.

Bioph. Well, I will consider of that at leisure, in the mean time tell us what is said to be the temper of the Air?

Sebast. O Sir, the Air is sweet and temperate beyond compare; it is *Æther* rather than Air, there is neither violent heat nor cold, no distinction of Summer and Winter, and indeed no such things, but a perpetual Spring; so that Flowers blossom, and Fruit ripen all the Year long; and by reason of this serenity and constancy of the Air, the Country is so healthful, that there is never any epidemical or reigning Disease, no man feeble and languishing; nay, not so much as wrinkles or grey hairs upon any mans head or face, insomuch that you would think the inhabitants were all absolutely immortal.

Bioph. If that one thing alone be true, I warrant you the Country wants no people.

Sebast. O very populous, yet by reason of its prodigious fruitfulness it can never be overstockt; for, they say, it yields a fresh Harvest of all kind of Fruits every Month, and that a most abundant one; forasmuch as no Weeds, nor Thorns and Bryars grow there, but only that which is good for the use of Man, and, which is most of all wonderful, all this is brought forth spontaneously, without the toil and labour of Man.

They say also there are no kind of wild Beasts there, either to affright and annoy the people, or to devour the Fruits of the Land; nay, not so much as any Serpents, or other venomous Creatures or troublesome Insects; and all this is owing to the clemency of the Air, the peculiar nature of the Soil, together with God's Blessing upon both.

Bioph.

Bioph. I perceive a man may eat well; and when he hath ſo done may ſleep in a whole Skin there, that I like; and I would to God it were not a Romance which you give us: But go on, *Sebaſtian*, what is the Polity and Government of the Country?

Sebaſt. The Government is perfectly Monarchical, and the Prince is abſolute; yet I do not hear that any of his Subjects wear wooden Shoes or feed upon Cabbage, but all of them enjoy their liberty and property as ſecurely and fully as in any Common-wealth in the World.

There is no ſquabbling about Privileges, no interfering between Prerogative and Immunities, Dominion and Common Right; the King commands what he will, and the people willingly obey him: for his Wiſdom and Goodneſs moderate his Will and Power better than all the Boundaries of written Laws.

And this I am informed of too, that though there be ſeveral Degrees of Subjects, as there are amongſt us, becauſe otherwiſe there could be no ſufficient encouragement to induſtry, nor no capacity in the Prince to ſet marks of favour upon thoſe that deſerve extraordinarily of him; yet from hence ariſe no emulations amongſt the Nobility, nor any oppreſſion of the Commons; the people do not envy and murmur againſt the Great Ones, nor on the other ſide do they as greater Fiſh devour the leſſer.

Bioph. A rare temper of Government this! and not leſs admirable than that of the Air you ſpake of before: You amaze me ſtrangely, But what are the ſtaple Commodities of the Country?

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. As for that you muſt know it is not with *Urania* as with moſt other Countries, where uſually one Province abounds with what another wants, and the other needs what that can ſpare; and ſo there is a neceſſity of reciprocal Intercourſe between them, both to relieve their neceſſities mutually, and to diſcharge their ſuperfluities; and herein you know lies both the reaſon of Trade, and the ſecurity of Alliances between ſeveral Countries in our Parts of the World. But now *Urania* being (as was wont to be ſaid of *Egypt*) a Country ſelf-ſufficient, depends not at all upon Foreign Commerce; and therefore as it needs nothing from abroad, ſo conſequently it ſends out few or none of thoſe Commodities it abounds with; but rather (as I ſhall tell you by and by) invites Foreigners to come over to them, and reſide amongſt them, and ſo to partake freely of the Advantages of that happy Land.

Yet I muſt tell you they have very great Rarities in thoſe Parts, and ſuch as are exceedingly deſired by all other People that underſtand the worth of them; as in particular to ſpecifie ſome few which are not at all to be found any where elſe.

In the firſt place they have the true *Elixir Vitæ*, a very precious Balm, far beyond that of *Gilead*, that perfectly cures all Diſeaſes, both inward and outward, I had almoſt ſaid of body and mind. This Operates without any pain to the Patient, and in outward applications, heals all kind of Wounds, and leaves no ſcar or mark behind it.

They have alſo an admirable Water, which ſo quickens all the Senſes, and peculiarly the Sight,

ſight, that a Man by the help of it ſhall ſee further than by a Teleſcope, and pierce into the very Secrets of Nature.

The common Food of the Country is ſomewhat anſwerable to the deſcription of *Manna*, and hath that peculiar taſte which every Man affects, and ſatisfies all the powers of Nature. They have alſo a delicious Wine called *Lachrymæ Chriſti*, which amongſt other Vertues makes Men forget all ſorrows whatſoever: And this they uſually drink in an Amethyſt Cup, which preſerves them from Surfeits or Intemperance, what proportions ſoever they drink.

Amongſt the reſt, they have a ſort of *Nitre*, ſo very powerful and abſterſive, that it takes away all ſpots, blemiſhes and aſperſions, and makes thoſe that uſe it ſo very beautiful, that they raviſh the Eyes of Beholders.

It were endleſs to go about to enumerate the Commodities of this Country, which clearly outgoes the Holy Land, though it was ſaid that in *Solomon*'s days Gold and Silver were there as common as the Stones of the Street: And for proof of it, the Inhabitants are generally ſo rich and proſperous, that there is not one poor Man in the whole Land, not one to be found, that doth need or will ask an Alms. The hungry and naked, thoſe grievous Spectacles (too ſadly common in moſt other places) are not to be ſeen there; of which, amongſt other cauſes, theſe are aſſigned, *viz.* there is no ſordid and cruel *Miſer* there, who hoards up what others ſhould live upon; nor is there any waſtful Glutton or Epicure, who devours his own and other Folks Portion too. In ſhort, they ſay, all deſirable things are there in ſuch abundance,

that every man is as rich, as full, and as happy as he pleaſes.

Bioph. If all this was poſſible to be true, which I muſt beg your pardon to declare I have not faith enough to believe, yet the felicity of this Country could not be long-liv'd; for it will certainly derive upon it ſelf the envy of all its Neighbours: and the effect of that will be, that thoſe who have the beſt Iron will quickly become Maſters of all this Wealth.

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, as for that there is no danger; for the Country is altogether inacceſſible, ſave only by one narrow way, and that is ſo well guarded and defended, that to this day no Enemy hath ever had the confidence to aſſail it. And beſides all, the Inhabitants are in ſuch perfect Peace and Amity one with another, and maintain ſo inviolably their Allegiance towards their Sovereign, that as no Foreigner hath any encouragement to enterprize upon them by treachery, ſo neither can he without mighty folly think himſelf conſiderable enough to prevail by force againſt ſuch an united ſtrength.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak of that, I pray give me leave to ask you one Queſtion more, What is the humour of the People, both amongſt themſelves, and towards Strangers?

Sebaſt. That is as admirable in its kind as any thing I have told you yet. The Complexion of the People is ſaid to be univerſally ſanguine, and conſequently they are ſprightly and cheeerful, ingenious and complaiſant, open-hearted and yet grave, without fraud and without jealouſie; they neither intend any hurt, nor do they ſuſpect any. Amongſt other Inſtances

ſtances of their ſedate cheerfulneſs, they are exceedingly addicted to Muſick, and their Songs are obſerved to be compoſed for the moſt part in praiſe of their Prince, the ſplendour of his Court, the Glory of his Atchievements, and the Felicity of his Reign.

So far are they from wrath and choler, that in the memory of Man there hath not been one Law-Suit commenced amongſt them; and, which is more, not one Theological Diſputation, which uſually are attended with ſo much heat and animoſity in theſe Parts of the World. But as for Tail-bearers, Whiſperers, Back-biters, and all that melancholy and envious Brood, there is not one of them to be found in all the Country; every Man there loves his Neighbour as himſelf, and is as tender of his intereſt and reputation as of his own.

And then for their temper and carriage towards Strangers, they are infinitely civil and obliging: They deride not other Mens habit, or mein, or language, or cuſtoms, or complexions; but contrariwiſe, whenſoever any ſuch come amongſt them, they welcome them heartily, treat them with all inſtances of Hoſpitality, and by all poſſible obligations and indearments, invite them to become one People with themſelves, and as much as in them lies are ready to contribute their aſſiſtance towards their Voyage.

Bioph. This is a very ſtrange Relation as ever I heard in my life: But in plain Engliſh it is too good to be true. All this can amount to no more than to ſome *Utopia* or new *Atlantis*. Pardon my freedom, good *Sebaſtian*; I acknowledge you a wiſe and a learned Gentle-

man, that Character all the World allows you, but in this particular Story ſome body hath unworthily abuſed your good Nature; for it can be no better than a Fiction, a Legend, a mere Flam.

Sebaſt. You do not ordinarily think a Man bound to warrant the News he tells you, but you us'd to be contented to take it as he hath it; and I am ſure you will not allow me to preſcribe to you what you ſhall believe; However, I aſſure you upon the word of a Gentleman and a Chriſtian, I have not deviſed it of my own Head, but am as well ſatisfied of the truth and reality of the Relation I have made to you, as it is poſſible for me to be of any thing which I have not ſeen with my Eyes; and I am very confident I have as good grounds for my perſwaſion, as it is fit for a diſcreet Man to require in ſuch a Caſe.

Sebaſtian *relates the grounds of the credibility of his Story.*

Bioph. I wiſh you could ſatisfie me as well; I pray therefore do us the favour to let us know what probabilities you go upon in this matter?

Sebaſt. They ſay we Engliſhmen (above all People) love to be cheated, and encourage impoſtors by our credulity: But if that be the humour of our Country-men, I muſt beg their pardon if I a little vary from them in that Particular. I confeſs I am not ſo ill-natur'd as to ſuſpect that every Body I converſe with hath deſigns upon me; nor yet am I ſo ſupinely ſoft and credulous, as to be at every Bodies mercy; or ſo greedy of News, as to ſwallow all that comes, without chewing. And as to the buſineſs before us, I poſitively affirm to you, I had this

this ſtrange Relation (as you eſteem it) from one that came from the place, and was an Eye-witneſs of what he reported, and therefore could not be deceived himſelf in what he related: And then his Quality was ſuch, as that he could have no intereſt to impoſe upon me therein; for he was no leſs a man than the only Son of the Great Monarch of the Country, and he came as Ambaſſador extraordinary from the King his Father, on purpoſe to invite and incline our people to participate of that happy Region, and of all the admirable advantages aforeſaid; and aſſured us, That all which came ſhould be free Denizons of *Urania.*

Bioph. Ay, Good *Sebaſtian*, he told you ſo; but how are you ſure he was not an Impoſtor; and deſigned to put tricks upon you and our good-natured Country-men?

Sebaſt. As for that, his very Perſon and Mien ſpake for him, both which were ſo Auguſt and Grand, as that no mean Man could bear out the Port he uſed: Beſides this, he came not in a clancular way, but made his publick Entry, and his Train and Equipage was Grave and Majeſtick, like himſelf, far beyond the empty pomp and pageantry of a Counterfeit. His Commiſſion and Letters Credential alſo were publickly ſeen, read and allowed; and they were ſealed with ſuch a Seal, as no wit of Man could imitate or counterfeit.

Add unto all this, I have ſeen the Map or Chart of the Country, I have peruſed the Digeſt of the Laws of the Kingdom, theſe Eyes have read the Records of their Hiſtory, and with this mouth I have taſted the delicious fruits

of the Land. What would you have more to juſtifie the matter of fact?

Biophil. What would I have more? Why, I think you venture too great a ſtock in one Bottom; I would not truſt to any one Man, whatſoever he were, in a relation of this nature; I ſhould require to ſee and ſpeak with many about it before I would believe it.

Sebaſt. You ſay well: But can you think it reaſonable to require that ſo great a Prince ſhould ſend many Ambaſſadors on ſuch an Errand, when he aims not at his own Greatneſs, or the accommodating of his own Affairs, nor hath any need of our allyance or aſſiſtance; but merely deſigns our benefit? Or can you expect that he ſhould ſend every day freſh Envoys, and that not only to whole Countries, but to every individual perſon too? And if you could imagine ſuch a Prince ſhould condeſcend to this alſo, can you think it would be eaſie to find many fit perſons for ſuch a purpoſe, who would be willing to forſake the Glories of ſuch a Court, or the contentments of home in ſuch a Region, and to expoſe themſelves to the difficulties and hazards of Travel, as well as to the change of Air and Diet, and a thouſand other inconveniences attendant upon ſuch an Expedition? No, *Biophilus*, it was an inſtance of wonderful Goodneſs, that ſuch a Prince ſhould ſend one Ambaſſador on ſuch an Errand, and admirable Charity and ſelf-denial in him that undertook and performed it.

Bioph. You ſpeak reaſon, I muſt acknowledge, in that particular; but yet I can never believe, that if there were any ſuch Country as your intelligence amounts to, it ſhould lie undiſcovered to

to theſe Parts of the World until now. What! *Drake*, *Candiſh*, *Columbus*, *Davis*, ——— none of them in all their Travels take notice of ſuch a Place, nor give the leaſt intimation of it until now.

Sebaſt. That is no ſuch ſtrange thing as you make it; if you call to mind how long a time it was before the World would believe there were *Antipodes*, and yet it is plain that ſo long one full half of the World was unknown to the other. Or, if you remember, that time was, (and that not an ignorant Age neither) when the Roman Empire was thought to embrace the whole Earth, which as now we are certain took not in one fifth (perhaps not one tenth) of it. Do you not know, that *Hercules*'s Pillars were accounted the Boundaries of humane Travels, and that for a great many Ages both the torrid and the frigid Zones (as they are called) were eſteemed uninhabitable, and all that time the World was ignorant of it ſelf? Beſides, you know it is not very long ſince thoſe vaſt Tracts of Land, the *Weſt Indies*, were firſt diſcovered by ſome of the perſons you have named; and, to ſay no more, I pray how many Ages paſt over the heads of Mankind before this our Native Country of *Britain* (as conſiderable as it is, and we juſtly eſteem it) came into any knowledge or conſideration with the reſt of the World: think it not ſtrange therefore if *Urania* was ſo lately diſcovered.

Bioph. But that which I principally intended to ſay was this. You afford me matter of great wonder, that you ſhould be ſo much concerned for a place very newly diſcovered (if it be diſcovered) but eſpecially that you ſhould be-

lieve ſo many ſtrange things of it, before any one perſon hath gone from hence, and returned hither again to confirm thoſe reports of it.

Sebaſt. Ifs and Exceptions are endleſs, and I know no way to make a Man believe that hath no mind to it: yet I will give you all the ſatisfaction I am able, and that which I think is ſufficient in ſuch a caſe. You muſt know therefore that this Country hath not been wholly undiſcovered until now, as you ſuppoſe; for I my ſelf have ſeen a Book of great Authority and Antiquity, which though ſomewhat obſcurely and figuratively written, yet certainly pointed at ſuch a place, and in ſome meaſure deſcribed it too, to him that attentively read and conſidered it. And beſides, there are ſome very credible relations concerning ſome certain perſons that have heretofore made very fortunate Voyages thither.

But as to that you object, that no Man hath gone from hence thither, and returned again to us to bring us the Tydings, you will eaſily ſatisfie your ſelf therein, if you conſider what I intimated before, *viz.* That thoſe who once get thither can have no inclinations to make a Change ſo much to their diſadvantage, as it muſt needs be for them to return hither again. Beſides, though they ſay the paſſage is not very long thither, yet it is no common Road; and therefore very few will (at leaſt unneceſſarily) undertake it.

Preparations for the Journey to Urania.

Phil. But if it be an untraced Path, how ſhall a Man find the way thither, if he have a mind to go?

Sebaſt. O *Philander!* there is no great difficulty

culty in that, if a Man be well reſolved on the buſineſs; for, beſides a Chart, and very punctual inſtructions which the Ambaſſador left behind him for that purpoſe when he was amongſt us, there are great ſtore of very skilful and faithful Guides and Pilots, who freely offer their ſervice, and will not fail with God's Bleſſing to land us ſafe there.

Phil. I cannot tell what *Biophilus* thinks of this buſineſs; But for my part, *Sebaſtian*, I am ſo raviſhed with your relation, that if there be ſuch a place in the World I will find it out by God's help. I thank God I am no Male-content, either with my Native Countrey, or my private Fortunes; yet I ſee no reaſon we ſhould, like Muſhrooms, live and die upon the ſame ſpot, and be a mere *acceſſio Soli*, or Heir-lomes to the place where we happened to be born, eſpecially if we may thus much mend our ſelves by the change. I am a Citizen of the World, and that ſhall be my Country where I can fare beſt.

But will you go with me, *Sebaſtian?* Then I ſhall not only be out of all doubt of the truth of your Narrative, when I ſee you ſo far believe it your ſelf, as to adventure all upon it; but I ſhall with much more cheerfulneſs change my Country, when I do not change my Friend, nor forego your Company.

Bioph. Obligingly ſpoken, and bravely reſolved, *Philander:* By God's Grace I will go with you; and to aſſure you of my intentions, I will now acquaint you that I have been this good while in ſetting things in order, and in making preparations for the Voyage.

Phil. But how ſhall we diſpoſe of our Eſtates here?

here? And what Commodities had we beſt to furniſh our ſelves with, to carry over with us?

Sebaſt. As for the diſpoſal of our preſent fortunes, I can tell you, there are very ſure Returns betwixt this Country and that; for the Prince himſelf will be your ſecurity, if you put your Effects into ſuch hands as he hath appointed. But as for Merchandiſe to carry with us, there will be no need of that; for the Country which we have in our Eye is ſo glorioufly rich and plentiful, the Prince is ſo noble and benign, and all the Inhabitants ſo kind and charitable, that we ſhall be ſure as ſoon as ever we come there to be furniſhed *gratis* with all that our hearts can wiſh: and moreover, if we ſhould put our ſelves to the trouble of tranſporting our Baggage with us, it would not only incumber us in our Journey, but would alſo ſeem to be ſuch mere traſh and lumber when we come there, that we ſhould be aſhamed of it, and of our ſelves too, for ſetting ſuch a value upon it.

But there is another thing, and much more material, which I muſt needs tell you of, in order to our more favourable reception when we come there; that is, we muſt before-hand quite alter our habit and garb, and not ſo much as ſmell of the Earth we came from: amongſt other things, we muſt diſuſe our ſelves from Onions and Garlick, and from fleſh too, that we may the eaſier accord with the Diet of the Country; and we muſt refine our Spirits, that we may be fit to breathe in that pure Air; and having ſo done, there needs no more but to carry with us great Minds and large Souls, to qualifie us both for the Society and Enjoyments there.

Phil.

Phil. Thank you, Dear Friend and Fellow-Traveller (for ſo I will henceforward ſtyle you) for theſe inſtructions I will uſe the beſt of my endeavours to be fitted accordingly: But is there any thing elſe that I need to be adviſed in.

Sebaſt. O yes, there is one thing more which I doubt you do not think of, and I am ſomewhat afraid leſt the mention of it ſhould diſcourage you; but it muſt be, and there is no avoiding it.

Phil. In the Name of God, what is it? Miſtruſt not my courage or conſtancy; I'll ſtick at nothing that croſſes my way to *Urania.*

Sebaſt. You remember I have intimated to you already, that when we come at the Country we deſign, we ſhall be immortal, we can never die afterwards; but we muſt die beforehand, or we ſhall never come thither. This is the pinch of the buſineſs, what think you of it now, *Philander?*

Phil. Never the worſe for that, fellow-Traveller: But Good Lord! what a Dream have I been in all this while? I thought verily you had ſpoken Hiſtorical truth of ſome rare Earthly Country: but now my Eyes are open, and I perceive you mean Heaven, that's the *Urania* you have all this while amuzed us with: Now I can unriddle the whole buſineſs: I have now a Clue to guide me through the Maze of your Diſcourſe, and can decypher all the Figures you have uſed. I am ſure 'tis Heaven only can anſwer the Character you have given; that is the place where there is no pain, ſickneſs, nor death; there is no Night nor Darkneſs, but a perpetual Day; there is to be found the true Balſom that cures all the Diſtempers and Wounds

Wounds both of Body and Mind; there are to be had all the other Rarities which you have mentioned; *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Ambaſſador from God Almighty, that invites us thither; all is plain and eaſie now; how dull was I, that I could not underſtand you ſooner!

Bioph. And have you drolled with us all this while, *Sebaſtian?* Have you weedled me back again into the Subject I declined? Is your famous *Urania* in another World? I thought your News was impoſſible to be true, and now you as good as confeſs it.

Sebaſt. By your Pardon, *Biophilus*, have I done you any wrong? You ask'd for News, and I have told you good and true News; News of more importance and more comfortable than any the Coffee-Houſe affords; not ill-natured Stories of Whig and Tory, nor ſurmiſes about *France* and *Italy*, Turk and Count *Teckley*; but a great Truth of a Kingdom that cannot be ſhaken, a Kingdom wherein there is Righteouſneſs and Juſtice, Unity and Joy, Love and Good will, everlaſting Peace, and everlaſting Life; a ſtate of that felicity, that it is able to make us weary of this World, and to render the time of our life tedious to us till we come to the enjoyment of it; in a word, that is ſufficient to make all the ways of Vertue ſeem eaſie and delectable, and even Death it ſelf deſirable in the way thither.

What think you of it, *Philander*, now you underſtand what Country it is I perſuaded you to? Doth your mind hold for the Voyage? Will you go on with your preparations for it, as we were diſcourſing before? Will you venture to ſhoot the Gulph that you may arrive at it.

Phil.

Phil. Yes, Fellow-Traveller, I hold my reſolution. For though I find I was miſtaken in the particular, yet not in the general; it was an Earthly Paradiſe that I had in my thoughts all the while you were diſcourſing figuratively to us, and I had no other apprehenſions of your deſign, and therein *Biophilus* was more in the right than I, who was confident there could be no ſuch Country in this World as you deſcribed: But I heartily thank you for the deception; you have cheated us into our own advantage. And now that I underſtand you, I do not change my Courſe, though I change my Port; I hope I ſhall not be ſo abſurd, as to be more in earneſt for an Earthly Country than for an Heavenly.

Philander *tranſported with the Contemplation of Heaven.*

Who would not gladly be at everlaſting reſt, and in an unchangeable Condition? We are *but Pilgrims and Strangers in this World*, but there we ſhall be at Home and in our Father's Houſe; here we are continually toſſed with Winds and Seas, tormented betwixt Hopes and Fears; there we come into Harbour, and ſhall be ſafe as upon a Rock, ſtable and ſetled as the Mountains.

Who can chuſe but wiſh to live for ever, and would not be contented to die once, that he might be out of the reach of Chance or danger for ever after? Everlaſting Life! what an Ocean of joy and felicity is contained in it! It puts me into an Ecſtaſie to think of it! Surely he doth not love himſelf, or doth not underſtand himſelf, who would not gladly leave an uncertain, troubleſome, quarrelſome, fooliſh, diſputing, ſuſpicious, envious World, upon far

far eaſier terms than the attainment of it. But to live with the Ever-bleſſed Jeſus, to ſpend Eternity in the Society of good and wiſe, kind and peaceable Men, to enter into everlaſting Friendſhips, inviolable Peace, unchangeable Felicity! I am raviſhed and tranſported with the thoughts of it.

When once I had the happineſs to take notice of a poor Man, blind from his Mother's Womb, who never had ſeen the Sun, nor could have any Notion of Beauty or Colours, nor of any of that variety of delightful Objects which the eye and light preſent to us, and entertain us with; when afterwards (I ſay) by a ſtrange Cure this poor Man had his eyes opened, and found a Crowd of new Delights preſs in upon him, he thought himſelf ſurrounded with Miracles, and was almoſt diſtracted with Wonder. And certainly no leſs, but a great deal more, will our ſurprize be when we come to Heaven, where probably we ſhall have new Powers opened, which ſhall diſcover ſuch Glories to us as we were not capable of perceiving before, if they had been preſented to us; but moſt certainly we ſhall then have new Objects of delight to entertain thoſe Powers we have, and thoſe tranſcendent to all we ever had experience of before.

Or when I think of the Children of *Iſrael's* firſt coming out of *Egypt*, where they had lived for ſome hundreds of Years in the Condition of Slaves, under the jealous Eye of a barbarous Prince, treated with hardſhip and ſeverity, and expoſed to all the indignities, inſolences and cruelty of a faithleſs and ingrateful People; and then after this (leaping, as we ſay, out of the

the Frying-pan into the Fire) were carried into a vaſt and howling Wilderneſs, and there ſpending forty Years more amidſt Seas and Mountains, in danger of Wild Beaſts, and beſet with Enemies, having no City of refuge, no ſtrong Holds, no Friends, no Allies, no Comfort or Supplies, but from hand to mouth; when (I ſay) theſe poor People arrived at laſt at the Promiſed Land, the Land of *Canaan*, a Land of Olive-yards and Vine-yards, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and the Glory of all Lands, and found themſelves peaceably poſſeſs'd of it, under their own God, their own Prince, and their own Laws, and flowing in ſuch plenty of all good things, that they now became the admiration and envy of all their Neighbours, who had been the Subject of their contempt and ſcorn before; I can but fanſie how they were aſtoniſhed at the change, what a wonder they were to themſelves; and I am apt to believe that for ſometime after they could not but ſuſpect they were under a pleaſant illuſion of fancy, and that all their felicity was no better than a Dream.

So aſſuredly, when we ſhall firſt come to Heaven, our ſpiritual *Canaan*, to the enjoyment of an happineſs of God's preparing, who hath all the ingredients of felicity in his power, and infinite Wiſdom to contrive and compound them, and unſpeakable goodneſs to beſtow them, and who, as the Scripture expreſſes it, hath from the beginning of the World been deſigning and preparing ſuch a ſyſtem of joy and felicity as may at once both moſt delight his Creatures, and diſplay all his aforeſaid Attributes; when I ſay, we ſhall firſt obſerve the ſtrange change

between

between a narrow, ſtingy, neceſſitous, unquiet, ſickly, peeviſh, and contentious World, which we have left behind us, and the ſettlement and peace, plenty and glory of that we enter upon; it will not be eaſie for us (without larger minds than we have now) to know how to behave our ſelves; we ſhall be apt to be oppreſt with wonder, and, if it were poſſible, to die with exceſs of joy.

Sebaſt. You ſpeak bravely and ſenſibly, Dear *Phil*, You ſeem to have gone up to Mount *Nebo*, and to have fed your Eyes with the proſpect of the Holy Land; but have you conſidered the difficulties of the way, as well as the happineſs of the Journey's end? Will you not like the Iſraelites (you ſpake of even now) repent, and bethink your ſelf of turning back when you encounter difficulty or danger? Will not Death affright you when it appears in all its diſmal pomp? Will you not ſhrink when you ſhall come to be ſtripped naked of all your Worldly Habiliments? Will you not have a lingring after your old Accommodations, your fine Houſe, rich Furnitures, pleaſant Gardens, ſprightly Wines, or any other Pleaſures and Entertainments of the Body?

Phil. No, no, *Sebaſtian*, I will go to Heaven, whatever come of it; what can diſcourage a Man when Heaven is at Stake? If the Journey put me to a little Trouble, there is Reſt at the end of it. What is it to exerciſe a little patience, when a Man ſhall be crowned at laſt? Who would not run, ſtrive, do, or ſuffer any thing, and venture all upon ſuch a Wager?

Shall I be frighted with Death? that will come

come however, and I am ſure the neglecting eternal life is not the way to eſcape it.

Chriſtian Reſolution.

Shall I be ſollicitous for my eſtate and worldly accommodations, when I know, whethere I go to Heaven or no, I muſt ſhortly leave them all behind me? And ſurely if they cannot ſave me from Death, they ought not to hinder me of eternal Life.

Or ſhall I hanker after Onions and Garlick, and the Fleſh-Pots of *Egypt*, as you called the pleaſures of the Body, which will certainly forſake me, if I do not forſake them firſt? No, I have counted the coſt, there is nothing ſhall diſcourage me by the Grace of God, I will go to Heaven; but I pray let us not part Company, let us go to Heaven together.

Sebaſt. With all my Heart, dear Friend; for though I doubt we muſt not expect much Company with us, yet perfect ſolitude is ſomewhat uncomfortable, and there are great advantages of Society. For if any body ſhould be ſo abſurd as to laugh at us on our Journey, we can the better deſpiſe them. If either of us ſhould happen to be heavy and weary in our way, we may animate and quicken one another. If any difficulty befall, that may be too hard for any one of us, by our united ſtrength we may be able to encounter and remove it. If either of us ſhould ſwerve a little out of the narrow way, towards the right hand or towards the left, the other may recall and rectifie him. Beſides, the great additional comfort it will be when we come at our Journies end, not only that we ſee one another happy,

The advantages of good Company in the way to Heaven.

and enjoy one anothers Society, but eſpecially when we reflect upon the good ſervice we have done to one another in bringing each other thither, we ſhall have our joys redoubled by the reflection, and feel not only our own individual ſhares, but that alſo of each other.

Phil. Happily thought of, Fellow-Traveller, but will not *Biophilus* go with us too? what ſay you, Sir?

Scepticiſm diſplaying its humour, and checkt by ſober reaſon.

Bioph. You are honeſt Gentlemen, and my good Friends; but, Lord, what Romances do you make, what Caſtles you do build in the Air, and what ſhadows do you feed your ſelves withal! You talk of Heaven as confidenly as if you had travelled an hundred times through all the Regions of it, or rather indeeed as if you had viſited the World in the Moon. But when all is done, did ever you or any Body elſe ſee ſuch a place as Heaven. For God's ſake therefore leave theſe Enthuſiaſtical Whimſies, and talk like Men, ſpeak of ſomething that is certain and viſible, or probable at leaſt, and do not forego ſubſtance for ſhadows, certainties for uncertainties.

Phil. God help you, good Neighbour, in requital of the caution you give us: aſſure your ſelf, we have the ſame ſenſes and the ſame ſelf-love that you have, and only wiſh you had the ſame Faith that we have. We are not willing to part with certainties for uncertainties; for if Heaven be not certain, we are ſure nothing elſe is. And as for the things of this World, they are ſo far from it, that nothing is more certain, than that we muſt part with them ſhortly, whether we will or no: But as for the other

other World, *we know whom* we have believed.

Bioph. I tell you, all is but dream and fancy, there is no proof in the World for it. All you have to ſay is, that Men muſt believe; as if you ſhould ſay, ſhut your Eyes and ſee; you perſwade a man to find the way to Heaven blindfold. No, give me good proof, or I'll not ſtir a foot; with me ſeeing is believing.

Phil. Remember your ſelf, good Neighbour, are not you a Chriſtian? Do not you believe that Jeſus Chriſt came from Heaven on purpoſe to make diſcovery to us of thoſe Celeſtial Regions, and to ſhew us the way thither? And did not he confirm his report to us by undeniable Miracles? Did he not come into the World miraculouſly, and return thither again viſibly? Did he not from thence ſend down admirable tokens of his Preſence and Authority there, eſpecially on the famous Day of Pentecoſt? Beſides, do you not ſee all wiſe Men provide for another World, and that generally good and vertuous Men, when they come to die, are raviſhed with joy in contemplation of it, as if they really ſaw Heaven open to receive them?

Bioph. Whether or no I believe as much as you do, yet I believe this one thing inſtead of all the reſt, that we are born to be cheated. For what with the illuſions of our own melancholy fancies, what by the prejudices of our Education, and the imperious dictates of others; what by the Authority of unaccountable Tradition, and publick Fame, and what by the deſigns of Politicians, it is an hard matter to know what elſe to believe.

Phil. Indeed, *Biophilus*, I am both ſorry and aſhamed to hear you talk at this rate. And I

do not wonder now, that you were ſo deſirous to decline this kind of Diſcourſe when we fell upon it. I hope you take me for your Friend as well as your Neighbour, and *Sebaſtian* here for a diſcreet and worthy Gentleman; ſuffer your ſelf to be perſwaded by us to think and ſpeak more ſoberly and becoming your ſelf in theſe great matters, or if you will not think like a Chriſtian, yet talk like a Man; for let me tell you, you ſeem not only to reject Chriſtianity, but all Religion in general, and upon thoſe terms you will be as little fit for this World as for that which is to come.

For what a ſad Creature is a Man of no Religion at all? What State or Civil Government will be able to endure him, whom no Oaths can oblige or faſten upon? How can there be any Civil Society with him that hath no Faith, that can neither truſt nor be truſted? What ſecurity can ſuch a Man give, that he ſhall not diſturb the State, violate the perſon of his Prince, falſify his truſt, betray his Friend, cut his Neighbours throat, if he be under the awe of no God, the expectation of no rewards nor puniſhments in another World? What ſecurity can there be, I ſay, in dealing with ſuch a Man, what ſincerity in his Friendſhip, what ſafety in his Neighbourhood? For all theſe depend upon the reverence of Religion, which he that is wholly deſtitute of, muſt needs become *devotum caput*, a Wolf's Head, the peſt and vermine of humane Society.

Do not therefore, dear *Biophilus*, at once both ſtifle your own Conſcience, and affront the common ſenſe and reaſon of Mankind Do not under the pretence of being more witty and ſagacious than other men, reaſon your ſelf into

into brutality, and whilſt you grow over-wiſe in your own Eyes, be the moſt fatally miſtaken and loſt for ever?

Why ſhould you abandon your ſelf to deſperation, and leave your ſelf without any refuge in adverſity: we are well and cheerful here at preſent, God be thanked; but the time will come when God will ſtand us in ſtead, when we ſhall have need of the retreats and comforts of Religion. Above all things in the World, leave not your ſelf without hope in your latter end, doe as becometh a Man of your parts and diſcretion, ſuſpect your own ſuſpicions, and let not the opinion you have, that other Men are under prejudices, prejudice you againſt the Arguments for believing. Come, deal ingeniouſly, and open your Breaſt, propound the grounds of your ſuſpicions, the objections you have againſt Religion; and though I cannot promiſe you that I will anſwer them all to your ſatisfaction, yet I doubt not but there is one that will.

Biophil. Look you, Gentlemen, you put me into a great ſtrait; for if upon this invitation of yours, I do not diſcloſe my mind to you, I ſhall ſeem diſingenuous, and you will think worſe of me than perhaps I deſerve; and on the other ſide, if I do diſcover my Sentiments, it is probable, that my Creed will fall ſo many Articles ſhort of yours, that we ſhall break out into ſome heats, and endanger the continuance of our Neighbourly Converſation. However ſince it ſeems to be your deſire, I will be plain with you, in confidence that, as you are Gentlemen, you wil deal ingenuouſly with me, and if you can do me no good, you will do me

no hurt; my meaning is, that if it ſhould happen you do not convince my reaſon, I hope you will not defame my perſon, nor expoſe me to the inſolencies of the Rabble, who believe in groſs and by whole-ſale, and throw Dirt upon all that chew what they ſwallow.

The Epicurean Creed.

Now in the firſt place, that you may not think me a perfect Sceptick, I declare to you, that I acknowledge the Being of a God, and that not only becauſe the generality of Mankind, and even *Epicurus* himſelf owned ſo much, but becauſe it is not conceivable how the World ſhould be without one; for no wit or reaſon of Man can evince to me, how any thing ſhould begin to be without ſome neceſſary and eternal Exiſtent, to begin the motion, and to bring it into Being; or which is the ſame thing in effect, there can be no ſecond Cauſe, if there be no firſt.

But then beyond this you muſt pardon me, for to deal ſincerely with you, I do not think that this God minds or troubles himſelf about the World after he hath made it. Much leſs do I ſee any ſufficient ground for that which *Philander* hath been talking ſo warmly about, namely, a World to come. And for eternal Life (which Men ſpeak ſuch great things of) I profeſs I look upon it as a flat impoſſibility, for as much as I ſee men die, but ſee no foundation for a belief, that there is any Life or Exiſtence out of a Body.

There are ſome other points of affinity with theſe that I with-hold my aſſent from: but becauſe you have challenged me to a rational Debate, therefore to give fair play, and to put the

the buſineſs between us to an Iſſue, I will inſiſt but upon one point, and that ſhall be the ſame which we fell into by chance at our firſt coming together; namely, whether there be ſuch a thing as a publick Tribunal or general Judgment, where Mens Actions ſhall be reviewed and cenſured after this life. Prove me but this one Point ſufficiently and plainly, and I will grant you all the reſt.

The great conſequence and general influence of the belief of a Judgment.

Sebaſt. Now you ſhew your ſelf a Man, and a ſhrewd one too, though not a Chriſtian. For I muſt acknowledge that you have with great judgment pitcht upon the very Cardinal Point of Religion; and which, if it be proved (as I do not doubt but it ſhall be) will infer all the reſt; but if it miſcarry, all falls with it. The perſwaſion of a Judgment to come is the great awe upon Mens Conſciences, the principal motive of Vertue and Piety, the reſtraint and check upon Vice and Wickedneſs, and indeed the ſinew of Civil Government, and bond of humane Society. This both ſuppoſes the Being of a God (which you grant) and of a Providence alſo (which you deny;) for if there were not a God, it is evident there could be no Providence in this World, nor Judgment in another: And this, if it be granted or proved, neceſſarily draws after it rewards and puniſhments in the Life to come; for otherwiſe a Judgment would be but a matter of curioſity, and a trouble to no purpoſe. You have therefore, in making choice of this for the critical or deciſive Point, given great proof of your own ſagacity, and put the matter upon a right iſſue.

Bioph. Well, prove it then.

Sebaſt. What proof do you require of this? Why ſhould not the Teſtimony of the Holy Scripture ſatisfie you? For in the firſt place, if there be a God (which you have acknowledged) you cannot but thiuk it reaſonable, that if he intend to judge the World, he ſhould give ſome intimation of it to the Sons of Men beforehand, ſince they muſt needs be ſo highly concerned in the knowledge of it; and then in the next place, the Scripture cannot be denied to be as expreſs and full in this particular, as it is poſſible for words to make it. There God declares and confirms it innumerable times; and the more to awaken Men to the conſideration of it, and preparation for it, he is ſaid to have appointed a ſet time for it, he hath foretold who ſhall be the Judge, with what pomp and retinue he ſhall come attended, what meaſures he ſhall proceed by, and what ſhall be the circumſtances of that great ſolemnity.

Scripture-proof of a day of Judgment, juſtified by reaſon.

Bioph. Excuſe me there, *Sebaſtian*, I am not to be born down by Authority, but convinced by Reaſon; if you will do any good upon me, you muſt deal with me as a Philoſopher, not a bigotted Perſon.

Sebaſt. By your favour, Sir, it is not to impoſe upon you, to give you Divine Authority for proof. If indeed I ſhould urge you only with the Opinions of Men, you might complain I did you wrong; for in ſuch a caſe your denial would have as much authority as their aſſertion: but I hope God may be believed upon his own word, eſpecially in a buſineſs of this nature, which depends ſo much upon the determination of

of his Will; for who can tell God's mind better than himſelf? *Who knows the mind of man, but the ſpirit of a man which is in him?* And who can pretend to declare what God will doe, unleſs he be pleaſed to reveal his intentions? But if he declare he will judge the World, we may be ſure it ſhall be done.

Bioph. Ay, but that is the Queſtion, *Sebaſtian*, how ſhall I be aſſured that God hath any ſuch intentions, or hath made any ſuch Declaration?

Sebaſt. That which we call by the name of holy Scripture, is nothing elſe but a Collection of ſuch Declarations of the Mind of the Divine Majeſty, as he hath thought fit from time to time to make to the Sons of Men. And thoſe Books, which are ſo called, have been reverenced by wiſe Men in all Ages upon that account, as ſuch, all imaginable care hath been taken to preſerve them from corruption or depravation, and ſeveral of the beſt of Men have expoſed their lives, rather than conſent to the deſtruction of them. Now why ſhould you call in queſtion the Authority of theſe Books, which you cannot doe without impeaching the wiſedom of the moſt able, and the ſincerity of the moſt honeſt of Men, and upon the ſame terms you derogate from the Faith of all Mankind, and muſt (if you will be impartial) abrogate the credit of all the old Records in the World. For as much as (beſides all other conſiderations) theſe Sacred Records, I mean the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, do bear an irrefragable Teſtimony to each other, and as a pair of Indentures, juſtifie one another. Which you will eaſily be convinced of, if you conſider, that theſe two Volumes

lumes were written in ſeveral very remote Ages, and conſequently by perſons that could hold no correſpondence one with another, and were in the cuſtody of thoſe that were of ſuch contrary Intereſts and Opinions, that it was imſſipoble they either would or could conſpire together to put a Cheat upon the World in them. Now if notwithſtanding theſe two Books (in the circumſtances aforeſaid) ſhall verifie one another, ſo as that whatſoever the Old Teſtament promiſes, the New Teſtament performs; what the one foretold, the other repreſents the accompliſhment of; what ground is or can there be to ſuſpect the truth of them? For if ſeveral Witneſſes, and thoſe of ſeveral Countries, and of contrary Intereſts, ſuch as never ſaw the Faces of one another before, and therefore neither would nor could combine together and contrive their Story, and eſpecially being examined apart too, ſhall notwithſtanding jump in the ſame matter of fact and circumſtances alſo, there is no Man ſo humourſome and abounding in his own ſence, but will allow their evidence to be good and ſubſtantial; then much more is there very good ground to believe theſe Books, which have all theſe advantages, and ſeveral other, which I will not inſiſt upon.

Bioph. Theſe are pretty things which you ſay; but this is not that kind of proof I expected from you: If this be all the ſatisfaction you can give me, I am where I was.

Sebaſt. No, *Biophilus*, this is not all I have to ſay; but I thought fit to remonſtrate to you the ſufficiency of this kind of proof in it ſelf, which Men of your way are apt to make ſo ſlight of, and thence to convince you, that thoſe Men that

that take up with this alone, are not ſuch ſoft and credulous people, as you are wont to repreſent them.

It is juſt prudence to prepare for a day of Judgment, though the evidence were leſs than it is.

But what if I had no other proof but this, I do not find that you are able to reply any thing to it; it is an eaſier thing to hough at an Argument, than to anſwer it. Beſides, if this way of probation were far leſs conſiderable than it is, yet you know that any evidence will ſerve againſt none, and the meaneſt Arguments will carry a Cauſe when there is nothing to be ſaid on the other ſide. If you could but pretend to prove on your part, that there were no ſuch thing as a Judgment to come, you had then ſome reaſon to be ſtrict in your demands of proof from me of what I aſſert: But in a true balance the leaſt grain or moment in the world will caſt the Scale when there is nothing againſt it. Now ſince you know well enough, you can offer no kind of proof of an aſſertion contrary to this we have before us, nothing in the Earth but overwiſe doubts, grave ſuſpicions, and, perhaps it may not be ſo, I appeal to your impartial reaſon, whether it be not more fit to ſuſpect (at leaſt) that it is ſo where there is ſome proof of it, than to ſuſpect it is not ſo where no Argugument is given for the Negative; nay, indeed where none can be given.

Negatives you know are hard to prove in general, but eſpecially in ſuch a caſe as this is: For he that undertakes to prove ſuch a Negative, hath but one of theſe two ways to doe it, *viz.* either he muſt affirm, That he hath ſurveyed the whole ſtate of Nature, and ſeen all the Cauſes

Cauſes that are in working, and then muſt aſſert *de facto*, that there is no ſuch thing upon the Loom as that he denies; and alſo that he perfectly underſtands the whole Mind and Will of God, and that he intends no ſuch thing; or elſe he muſt demonſtrate by reaſon, that it is plainly impoſſible, and a flat contradiction, that any ſuch thing ſhould be: either of which you cannot, without intolerable abſurdity, affirm in the preſent Caſe.

So that, as I ſaid, you have nothing but bare ſuſpicions on your ſide (whatever Arguments I have on mine.) Now beſides the unequal balance of nothing againſt ſomething, be it never ſo ſmall, do but conſider what ſtrange imprudence it is to adventure ſo great a ſtake, as all your intereſt in another World amounts to, upon a mere *non putâram*; for what if ſuch a thing ſhould happen to prove true at laſt, what will become of you then, what a ſad condition are you caſt into!

Wiſe Men are wont to value not only certainties, but alſo probabilities, and even contingencies alſo; now ſeeing it is not impoſſible but ſuch a thing may be, and it is of infinite conſequence, if it ſhould be, there is all the wiſedom in the World to be provided for it. You will ſay, It may not be; but that is all that Infidelity it ſelf can enable you to ſay, and then ſure it is far ſafer to ſuppoſe that it may be, for no hurt can come of that; but the danger is unſpeakable on the other ſide, if it ſhould prove to be true. In a word, in ſuch a caſe as this is, it is a wiſe Man's part rather to believe upon ſlight evidence, than to disbelieve upon great preſumptions.

Bioph.

Bioph. I am beholden to you for the Friendly caution you give me; but it is your reaſons I expect at this time, and not your advice.

Sebaſt. Thoſe you ſhall have preſently, and do not think I trifle with you, or decline the proof I promiſed, becauſe I proceed thus gradually and ſlowly with you: The true reaſon whereof is, becauſe I would rather your own prudence ſhould incline you to believe, than that my Arguments ſhould preſs you to it, and I much more deſire that you ſhould be ſafe, than that I ſhould have the glory of a Victory; it is only your concern that we go upon, have therefore a little patience that we may rightly underſtand one another, and ſince you have refuſed Scripture-proof, give me leave to ask you particularly what kind of proof you expect of this matter under our conſideration.

What kind of proof and what meaſure of evidence is to be expected in the Principles of Religion.

In the firſt place, I hope you do not require ſenſible evidence of a Day of Judgment: you were ſaying even now, that no Man had ſeen Heaven, and therefore you did not believe it. Poſſibly thoſe words ſlipt from you unadviſedly, however it is (you know) a thing future which we are now debating about, and ſenſible proof cannot be required of that without flat contradiction: It is as if a Man ſhould deſire to ſee that which confeſſedly is not to be ſeen, and that a thing ſhould be that is not, or be and not be at the ſame time; you know you cannot have ſenſible evidence to day that the Sun will riſe to morrow; in ſhort, neither of any thing paſt nor future, but only of that which is preſent.

There

There are ſome Men in this Age, and perhaps you may be acquainted with them, who will only appeal to their ſenſes, and accordingly they reject the Notion of God and of Spirits, meerly becauſe they can ſee no ſuch things. Now if I thought this were your Opinion, I muſt go another way to work than I intended; but if it will content you that I make the Point ſeem reaſonable and clear to the Eyes of your mind, though I do not gratify your bodily Eyes with a ſtrange proſpect, then I will proceed as I deſigned.

Bioph. Well, we are agreed for that. I did, I confeſs, ſpeak of ſeeing Heaven, but there was no contradiction in that; becauſe if there be any ſuch place, it is ſuppoſed to be conſtantly exiſtent, and therefore may be viſible: yet I do not expect to ſee the Judgment till the time comes, becauſe futures are not to be ſeen, but foreſeen. Go on therefore, and give me rational evidence, and it ſhall ſuffice.

Sebaſt. But there is another thing I deſire to be reſolved of, namely, what meaſure or degree of rational evidence you will be ſatisfied with. The reaſon of my enquiry is this: Some men there are who highly pretend to a readineſs to believe upon juſt grounds, but when it comes to tryal, they are humourſome and captious, they will require ſuch evidence as the nature of the thing cannot admit of (even ſuppoſing it to be true) they expect ſuch proof as ſhall leave no room for cavil and exception, ſuch as a Man can find no evaſion from, but that will extort an aſſent from him whether he will or no. Now I muſt tell you, this is very hard and unreaſonable in any caſe whatſoever, for

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as much as the wit of Man is fitter to pull down than to build up, and it is the eaſieſt thing in the World to find ſhifts and cavils, inſomuch that he muſt believe very little indeed, that will admit of nothing which ſome ſlight objection or other may be made againſt. God himſelf hath provided no remedy for contumacy, and ſuch Men muſt go on, and periſh without Cure; for no argument can eſcape a captious humour.

Beſides, if ſuch ſtrict demands of ſatisfaction were at any time allowable, yet can they by no means be reaſonably inſiſted upon in ſuch a Caſe as this; for if ſuch irreſiſtible evidence were to be had in this matter, there would be no room for Vertue, it would then be a neceſſary action to believe, and no inſtance of choice, nor any argument of a vertuous mind; for what can be the praiſe or rewardableneſs of doing that which a Man cannot chuſe but do? or what excellency is there in Faith, when there is no pretence in the World for unbelief?

Therefore all that you can juſtly and wiſely expect in the preſent caſe, is, That there be ſufficient ground given you for a diſcreet choice, and over-weight enough in one Scale to incline the judgment of a prudent Man, ſo far that he ſhall ſee it is more reaſonable that he believe, than that he do not. This is very properly to be eſteemed conviction of our reaſon; this is the juſt Standard of Prudence, and this is the Principle that wiſe men govern themſelves by in weighty affairs. And indeed, if no Man ſhould determine himſelf to the purſuit of a buſineſs until there were no objection, no excuſe, colour, or pretence to the contrary, all the no-

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bleſt projections and moſt profitable and neceſſary undertaking of Mankind, would be nipped and blaſted in the Bud.

Bioph. In truth I do not ſee but your demand is reaſonable, and I muſt yield to you in this particular alſo.

Sebaſt. Then I ask no more.

In order to the ſatisfaction of a Man's judgment, he muſt firſt come to indifferency.

Phil. Yes, *Sebaſtian*, let me put you in mind of one thing more, which is, That *Bipohilus* will promiſe you to hold the Scales even, otherwiſe an overweight in either of them will not be diſcernible; my meaning is, that he agree to be ſincerely indifferent, and willing to believe on the one ſide as well as on the other: for I have found by my own experience, that whilſt a Man retains a partial fondneſs for an Opinion, it is not all the Arguments in the World ſhall beat him out of it, he will ſee all that which makes for him as through a magnifying Glaſs, and ſo think it great and conſiderable, and contrariwiſe all that which is againſt him ſhall ſeem little and deſpicable. But when a Man comes to this paſs, that he is content one ſide ſhould be true as well as the other, then (and not till then) the beſt reaſon will carry it. Therefore unleſs you premiſe this, you will ſtrive againſt the ſtream, and diſpute in vain.

Sebaſt. Thank you heartily for that, *Philander*. It is very true, *Biophilus*, that if you oppoſe reſolution and prejudice againſt the diſcourſe I am to make to you, that will be Armor of proof againſt all the Arguments that can be brought, and then we had as good ſtay here as go further and loſe our labour.

But

But why, good *Biophilus*, ſhould you not lie as far towards the Doctrine which I am aſſerting, as towards the contrary? Nay, why ſhould you not look upon it as greatly your intereſt, that there ſhould be another World, and a Judgment at the end of this? It is certain, you and all of us muſt die, there is no peradventure in that, and it were a moſt ſad and diſmal thing to think of it, if Death put an utter end to a Man, ſo that all his comforts and all his hopes expire with him. And I wonder in my heart how any Man can think of Death with any meaſure of patience upon thoſe terms; and that it doth not make him ſullen and melancholy all the days of his life. You will ſay he muſt yield to neceſſity; but that is a remedy worſe than the Diſeaſe (if it be poſſible) to ſeek a cure for Death in deſperation; to tell me there is a neceſſity of dying, is only to tell me there is no help in the caſe, which is the very thing I complain of.

It is greatly a man's intereſt that Religion ſhould be true.

And this conſideration is ſo much the more ſharp and cutting, by how much the more a Man's Life hath been pleaſant and comfortable. As for a Man that hath all his Life-time been oppreſſed with Calamities, pinched with Poverty, covered with Obloquy, or afflicted with horrible Pains, &c. it may ſeem eaſie to him to die, that ſo he might have that reſt in the Grave which he could not have above Ground; and though he thinks he ſhall be ſenſible of no comfort there, yet he ſhall fare as well as other Men in that State. But for him that hath had good treatment in the World, pleaſant accommodations, tempting fortunes and enjoyments,

for ſuch a Man to think of Death, which will ſpoil him of all his Ornaments, and level him with the Duſt, that will interrupt all his delights, put an end to all his deſigns ond projections, and draw a dark veil over all his glories: I ſay, if ſuch a Man hath nothing to comfort him againſt Death, if there be no life after this, but a Man muſt for ever forſake and be forſaken of all his felicities, I cannot ſee how he can poſſibly avoid an unſpeakable abhorrence of it: nay, that's not all neither; for methinks it ſhould render all his preſent enjoyments not only inſipid and loathſome, but even a very torment to him whilſt he is in the midſt of them.

Now why ſhould any Man reſiſt the only remedy in this caſe, the only conſolatory againſt the ſumm of all calamities, which is the hopes of another Life? Why ſhould he be willing to die as the Beaſt dies, and to abandon himſelf to the grave, to rottenneſs and oblivion? It were certainly better never to have been born, than both to live in perpetual fear of dying, and being dead, to be as if a Man had never lived; better never to have taſted the ſweets of life, than to be only tantalized, and by that time he begins to live, to begin to die, and then be eternally deprived of what he juſt had a ſmack and a ſight of.

Nay farther yet, if a Man had lived only like a Beaſt, it had been no great matter to die like a Beaſt: If I ſay, a Man look'd no farther than his Fodder, had no ſenſe of any thing but eating and drinking, and had a Soul in him that ſerved only for ſalt to keep the Body from putrefaction, ſo that he never look'd about him, made no improvement of himſelf; and had no deſigns

deſigns in his Head, it were leſs matter, if he returned to the Earth, which (like a Mole) he did nothing but root in and turn over whilſt he was upon it. But for a Man of an Active Soul, of improved Parts, of Reaſon and Wiſdom and Uſefulneſs, to be ſmothered in the Grave, ſo that all his Notions and Diſcoveries, all Arts and Sciences; nay, all his Vertues and Gallantry of Mind, all his hopes and deſigns ſhall be abruptly broken off and buried in Oblivion; this is ſo ſad and diſmal a thing, that it is able to diſcourage all ſtudy and induſtry, all care and culture of a Man's ſelf; for why ſhould I ſtrive to live like a Man, if I muſt die like a Beaſt? Why ſhould I take pains to know, when *by increaſing knowledge, I ſhould but increaſe my ſorrow?* For as much as the more I know, the more I ſhall feel my ſelf miſerable and indeed become guilty of my own torment: So that if there were no hopes after this preſent life, it would be a more adviſable courſe for a Man to abandon himſelf to the moſt dark and ſqualid Barbariſm, rather than to weary and wear out himſelf in the queſt of knowledge, and better never to apply himſelf to any ſtudy, or to beſtow any pains or coſt upon himſelf; nay, indeed, if it were poſſible, it were deſirable never to know any thing, or to think at all. For why ſhould a Man put a cheat upon himſelf? Why ſhould he take not only unprofitable but vexatious pains? In a word, why ſhould he not ſo live as he muſt die? To all which add, That if there were indeed no other World nor Life hereafter, and if there be any Man that can find in his heart to be fond of living upon thoſe terms, he muſt of neceſſity be a pitiable ſlave

whilſt he continues here; the perpetual fears of death cramping him, and keeping him in continual bondage, that he ſhall not have the ſpirit or courage to dare to do any brave action; but contrariwiſe he will be unavoidably tempted to be a wrethed Coward and baſe Fellow, and become a ſordid Paraſite, to flatter and humour every body meerly upon the account of ſelf-preſervation.

Why therefore ſhould any Man be fond of ſuch an uncomfortable, nay, ſuch a ſottiſh and debaſing opinion? Why ſhould not a Man chuſe rather to erect his own mind, and be willing to hope well of himſelf by cheriſhing an expectation, that he may ſeurvive his body, and live eternally?

Bioph. There is no queſtion, *Sebaſtian*, but that living for ever is very deſirable, if a Man could hope for ſuch a thing abſolutely, and not clogged with conditions. As for death it ſelf, that would have no great matter of formidableneſs in it, if it be either (as I ſuppoſe it) a perfect interciſion of all ſenſe: Or much leſs, if it were (as the Men of your Perſwaſion uſe to ſpeak) only a dark paſſage to another light. But the miſchief is, that upon your Hypotheſis, a judgment muſt paſs upon a Man firſt, before he can arrive at that other life. Now that is the terrible thing, If I were rid of the danger of that, it would (as you ſay well) be my intereſt to believe all the reſt, in ſpight of all objections to the contrary.

Sebaſt. I do not deſign to impoſe upon you; for it is very true, there is no paſſage into the other World, without undergoing a Teſt or Trial, whether we be fit for Eternal Life or no.

And

And it is moſt certain alſo, that if a Man die an impious, a baſe and wicked perſon, it were better for him that either he had not been born, or elſe that the grave and oblivion might cover him to all Eternity. But what need this fright any Man whilſt he is alive, and may provide himſelf accordingly? eſpecially ſince the grace of God puts it in our choice and power to be good, and ſo qualified, that we may be out of all danger of miſcarrying in the Judgment.

For, *Biophilus*, can it be thought that God Almighty ſhould ſeek the ruine of his Creatures, or that he can have any deſign upon them to make them eternally miſerable? If he had, there would not be the ſolemnities of a Day of Judgment; for he would not need to inſnare us in forms of Law, but might without more ado have deſtroyed us when he pleaſed, and who could reſiſt him, or diſpute the caſe with him? Undoubtedly he is too great a Majeſty to have any little ends to ſerve, and therefore we can ſuſpect no hurt from him, and there could be nothing but the overflowings of his own goodneſs that provoked him to make us at the firſt; and therefore there can be nothing of envy, malignity or cruelty in any of his counſels and deſigns about us.

And that all theſe are not mere ſayings or ſanguine conjectures of mine, but real truth (beſides all other ways of probation) you may be aſſured by this conſideration, that in all God's demands from us, as the terms and conditions of our happineſs, or (which is all one) in all the duties he requires at our hands, and in all the obligations of Religion, there is nothing ſevere and diſcouraging, nothing ex-

tremely harſh and difficult, much leſs impoſſible: nay, in truth, if things be rightly conſidered, I believe there will be nothing to be found in any inſtitution of Religion that ever was heard of in the World, that could go ſo much againſt the grain with Men, as to tempt them to run the hazard of dying eternally, rather than to comply with it. And if any ſuch were to be found, it were ground enough to aſſure us, that ſuch inſtitutions proceeded not from God; for ſuch is his Wiſedom and Benignity, that he can impoſe nothing as a ſevere Task-Maſter, purely to abridge our liberty, or to break our ſpirits, and oppreſs our powers, but only to raiſe and improve us according to our utmoſt capacities, and as neceſſary methods to train us up as Candidates for Eternal Life.

I will not deny but there are ſome reſtraints put upon us, and ſome difficulties we muſt expect to encounter, otherwiſe Religion would have no excellency in it, nor could we have either the glory or the pleaſure in obtaining our end and happineſs, if it were won without ſweat and labour. But I do confidently aſſert, that theſe difficulties (whatever they are) we ſhall find juſt reaſon to undergo with all chearfulneſs, if we do but compare what Religion promiſes, with what it commands or impoſes. And as for the Chriſtian Religion in particular, all this which I have ſaid is ſo remarkably true of that, that if any thing hath been repreſented as a branch and neceſſary duty thereof, which is of a contrary nature to what I have now ſuppoſed, I do not doubt with great eaſe to make it appear, that ſuch ſuggeſtion is either a palpa-

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ble miſtake, or a notourious ſcandal. Why then, I ſay, ſhould a Man think either ſo ill of God or of himſelf, as to be afraid or unwilling to fall into his hands? You cannot forebode any evil from him, if you are ſatisfied that he is perfect and happy, full and glorious, juſt and good; and therefore you muſt condemn your ſelf of prodigious folly, in not complying with reaſonable and equitable Laws, and of being wilfully acceſſary to your own calamity, if you dare not undergo his Judgment. So that upon the whole matter there can be no reaſon, why you ſhould be unwilling to believe there is ſuch a thing, and that is all I deſire of you at preſent, and I heartily conjure you to be true to your ſelf herein.

Bioph. Well, I am reſolved to be as indifferent as it is poſſible to be: Now therefore prove it.

Sebaſt. That I will do with all poſſible plainneſs and ſincerity; namely, I will make good that there is ſufficient reaſon to incline a prudent Man to expect and believe, that after this life God Almighty will call Men to account, and judge them according to their former actions and behaviour. *The moral demonſtration of a judgment to come.*

Now you know it is the nature of Moral Arguments, not to depend upon one ſingle Evidence, but to conſiſt of the united force of ſeveral conſiderations: Accordingly my preſent proof of a Judgment to come (as aforeſaid) muſt compriſe theſe three particulars.

Firſt, I will ſhew, That the nature and condition of Mankind is ſuch, as to render him fit and capable to come to an account, and to undergo

dergo ſuch a Judgment as we ſpeak of.

Secondly, That it is very agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God (according to thoſe Notions which we have of him) that he ſhould call Mankind to ſuch an account, and judge them.

Thirdly, That God Almighty actually exerciſes and diſplays ſuch a Providence in this preſent World, as gives earneſt before-hand, that he really intends to judge it hereafter.

Theſe three things make way for and ſucceed each other naturally, and all together amount to a full proof of the Point in hand. Wherefore when I have opened and made them out ſeverally in the order I have laid them down, I will leave it to you to collect the reſult of them.

Mankind is of ſuch a nature, and endued with ſuch powers, as make it reaſonable for him to expect Judgment.

1. I ſay the nature and condition of Mankind is ſuch, as renders him capable of undergoing a Judgment in another World; and therefore it is reaſonable that he expect it accordingly. This will appear by the inſtances following.

In the firſt place it is notorious, that Mankind is endued with a large and comprehenſive mind, which is not confined to the mere objects of his ſenſes and things preſent before him, but hath a vaſt ſcope and proſpect, by means of which he ſurveys the Univerſe, embraces the whole World, and takes within his Verge, as well things paſt and things to come, as thoſe that are preſent, which no other Creature is capable of but himſelf. The Beaſt hath no kind of notice of or concern for what was

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in former time, nor no ſolicitude about what may come after; but only applies it ſelf to the preſent exigencies or conveniencies of the body. But Man is very curious and inquiſitive into Hiſtory, and how things paſt of old, long before he was born, and is alſo very thoughtful and anxious what may befall hereafter when he ſhall be dead and gone. Now this one conſideration alone makes him look as if he were a Being that were concerned in the whole frame of Nature, and in all the revolutions of Providence, and at leaſt of more conſequence than to be a mere Pageant for the ſhort time of this life, or a Muſhroom to ſhoot out of the Earth, and return to it again, and ſo be as if it had never been.

Beſides, we may obſerve, That the mind of Man doth not only conſider the abſolute nature of things as they lie ſingly and ſeverally before it, but compares them together, and eſtimates their relative natures, the mutual reſpects that they have to each other, and the various aſpects and influences they have upon each other; and ſo comparing and conferring things together, raiſes obſervations, makes inferences, deduces concluſions, frames general maximes, thereby brings things into order and method, and raiſes Arts and Sciences. All or any of which things no Creature below himſelf makes any pretence to, or gives any token of. From whence we may conclude not only the pre-eminence of Nature, but that he is ordained to higher purpoſes.

Moreover, Mankind is endowed with liberty of choice and freedom of will, by virtue of which he doth not only move himſelf by his own

own internal Principles and vital Energy, but alſo can determine himſelf to this object or that, and either preſume or deſiſt the proſecution at his own pleaſure: Inſomuch that he is neither carried by the ſwinge of any ſuperiour cauſes, nor fatally allured by the powerful charms of any objects from without, no nor by the efficacy of any Arguments ariſing therefrom, nor any impreſſion whatſoever (ſaving that of God Almighty) can overbear or ſuperſede his own reſolution, but that he can act or deſiſt, ſuſpend proſecution or purſue his own choice, and apply himſelf to this object or that, and follow this argument and motive or the other; he hath ſuch an Helm within himſelf, that he can ſail againſt Wind and Tide; he can move himſelf in a calm, and ſtay himſelf in a ſtorm: In a word, he can move which way, when and how far he will, and ſtop his own career when he pleaſes. The truth of this we find by daily experience, and we commonly pleaſe our ſelves too much in this Prerogative of our Natures. We ſee that which is better, and follow that which we know to be worſe; we hear Arguments and reject them, becauſe we will doe ſo; we are perſuaded to the contrary, and yet go on; and when and whatſoever we act, we find at the ſame time we could have done quite contrary, if we had pleaſed. Other Creatures either act merely as they are acted by ſuperiour Cauſes drawn by inviſible wyers, or fatally inclined by the objects and motives before them; but we are put into the hand of our own Counſels, and wholly governed by our ſelves, as to our inward reſolutions and determinations. Now this, as it is a mighty diſcri-

diſcrimination of our Natures from theirs, ſo it hath this pecular effect, that it renders a Man's actions properly his own, and imputable to himſelf and to nothing elſe, and conſequently fits him to undergo a Judgment for them.

But further yet, to make Mankind more capable of a Judgment, he hath a directive Rule or Law of Reaſon within him, whereby to govern himſelf both in his Elections and Proſecutions, that is, he acts not only freely and undeterminately in reſpect of any cauſe without himſelf, but he hath a light within to guide and direct thoſe free powers of his, that they may not run riot and move extravagantly, by the means of which he is enabled both to make choice of his deſigns, and to ſelect fit and proper methods of accompliſhing them. For as he is not ſtaked down to ſome one particular buſineſs (as generally other Creatures are) but hath great ſcope to expatiate in, and variety to pleaſe himſelf withall; ſo he hath a Card and Compaſs given him to ſail by in that vaſt Ocean which lies before him: that is, he hath a faculty of diſcerning the difference of things, and conſequently can judge what is worthy to be propounded as his poſt and deſign, and alſo to meaſure and adjuſt the means thereunto, which renders him more fit to give an account both of his Elections and Proſecutions.

Nay farther yet, humane Nature by the advantage of this light within him, hath not only a capacity of apprehending and judging of natural good and evil, or ſuch things as are only pleaſant and profitable, or the contrary, but hath alſo notions of higher good and evil, which we commonly call Moral; that is, he finds

finds himſelf obliged to have regard to ſomething elſe beſides and better than his body; namely, either to the Deity, or to the Community of Mankind, or at leaſt to his own better part his Soul and Mind. None of which are at all conſidered by any Creature below Man, and there is hardly any part of Mankind (at leaſt that deſerve to be ſo eſteemed) which doth not think it ſelf concerned in all theſe. For we ſee, whoſoever hath any thing of a Man in him, doth think ſome actions to become or not become him reſpectively, merely as he is a Man, which would admit of no difference, but be all alike in a Beaſt: Whereupon it is that a Man cannot diſpenſe with himſelf in the doing of ſeveral things, which are in his power to doe, no not in the dark and the greateſt privacy, becauſe every Man that in any meaſure underſtands himſelf, hath a reverence of himſelf, and the effect of this betrays it ſelf in that quick ſenſe which Mankind hath peculiarly of ſhame and honour, which argues him to be accountable to ſomething higher than his ſenſes.

Above all this, it is conſiderable that Mankind hath not onely a ſpeculative apprehenſion of moral good and evil, but a practical and very quick and pungent ſenſe of it, which we call Conſcience, by which he not only remembers and calls to mind whatſoever hath paſt him, but reflecting alſo upon the ends and circumſtances of his own actions, and comparing what he hath done both for matter and manner either with the rule of Reaſon within him, or ſome other Law, he cenſures and judges himſelf accordingly. If he hath done well and vertuouſly; that is, hath approved himſelf to himſelf,

ſelf, he then applauds and comforts himſelf, and feels an unſpeakable ſatisfaction in his own mind: As for Example, if a Man have behaved himſelf gallantly towards his Prince and Country; if he have carried himſelf ingenuouſly and gratefully towards his Friends, his Patrons or Benefactors; if he have been beneficient to any part of Mankind; if he have demonſtrated love to God, or goodneſs and good Men; if he have reſtrained his own rage and paſſions; if he have reſcued an Innocent from the hand of the Oppreſſor, or done any thing of like nature, the heart of every Man naturally in ſuch a caſe feels ſuch an inward delight as ſweetens his Spirits, and chears his very Countenance. On the contrary, if he have been falſe, treacherous and ingrateful; if he have been cruel and oppreſſive, or have ſaid or done any baſe thing, he is preſently upbraided, accuſed, condemned and tormented by himſelf. Now what is all this but *Præjudicium*, a kind of anticipation of the Judgment to come?

But if any Man ſhall pretend this thing called Conſcience, which we now ſpeak of, to be no natural endowment of Humanity, but only the effect of Cuſtom and Education; ſuch a perſon may eaſily undeceive himſelf, if he will but conſider, that all this which I have ſpoken of Conſcience, both as to the matter and form of it (or *Syntereſis* and *Syneideſis*, as Learned Men are wont to diſtinguiſh) is ſo univerſal to all Mankind (at leaſt that have not done violence to themſelves) that it can with no colour be imputed to Education, but muſt be reſolved into the very nature and ſenſe of the Soul. And moreover, a different notion and apprehenſion

of

of the fore-mentioned particulars, is ſo deeply implanted in the minds of Men, that it is impoſſible any contrary Cuſtom or Education ſhould abſolutely and totally efface it; therefore it is the ſenſe of Nature, and conſequently a preſage of the Divine Judgment.

To all which add in the laſt place, That the Mind of man ſeems plainly to be above the Body, and independent of it; for as much as we ſee, that not only our Reaſon and the Powers of our Souls, are ſo far from decaying with the Body, that contrariwiſe they grow more ſtrong and vigorous by thoſe very cauſes which impair the Body, I mean, by Age, Exerciſe and Experience. Beſides, it is eaſily obſervable, that our Souls do, as often as they pleaſe, act quite contrary to the intereſts and inclinations of our Bodies, and frequently controul the paſſions thereof, as well as correct and over-rule the Verdict of our Senſes. Therefore it is not at all probable, that they ſhould periſh with our Bodies, but ſurvive to ſome further purpoſes, eſpecially if we take in what I intimated before, namely, the conſideration of the ſhortneſs of the time of this life, which is ſo very inconſiderable for ſo excellent a Being, as the Soul to diſplay it ſelf in, that it ſeems unworthy of all the aforeſaid perfections, and more unworthy of the contrivance of that Wiſdom which made us to order it ſo, unleſs it be that Mankind is placed here only in a ſtate of probation, and is to be tried hereafter in order to a more laſting ſubſiſtence and duration. Which in conſideration of all the premiſes, he cannot but be thought capable of, at leaſt if there be a Judge as fit to judge him, as he is fit to undergo a Judgment. Which brings me to my ſecond Branch.

Bioph. Hold a little, I pray, good *Sebaſtian*, you have ſpoken many things well and worthily of the pre-eminence of humane Nature, and ſome of them ſuch as are not only ſufficient to erect a Man's Spirits, and provoke him to hope well of himſelf, but alſo do render it in ſome ſort probable, that we are deſigned for ſome higher uſes, than we commonly apply our ſelves to. Nevertheleſs you have not reached your point, nor will all you have ſaid attain the end you propounded, unleſs you go further, and prove the Soul of Man to be a Spirit or immaterial Subſtance (as the Men of your way are wont to ſpeak) that ſo there may be a plain foundation for its exiſtence out of the Body. Without which, let it be as excellent a Being as it can, and adorned with as many other Perfections as you can imagine, it cannot be capable of ſtanding at a Tribunal, and undergoing ſuch a Judgment in another World as we are ſpeaking of.

Sebaſt. I could have wiſhed you would have given me leave to lay all the parts of my Argument together before you, that ſo you might have taken a view of it intire and all at once: and then you might have objected, as you ſhould have ſeen cauſe. But however I will comply with your Method, and as to that which you have thought fit now to interpoſe, I anſwer theſe two things.

Firſt I ſay, It is not neceſſary to the buſineſs in hand, that the Soul be proved to be ſtrictly immaterial and capable of exiſting and acting out of the Body; for as much as at the Day of Judgment I ſuppoſe the Body ſhall be raiſed again: And then if it ſhould be ſo, that all the powers

powers of the Soul were laid asleep by Death until that time; yet now upon a re-union with their proper Organs, they would revive again. So that I did not in my proof fall short of the mark I aimed at, but you outshoot the point in your demand: For whether the Soul be a spiritual substance or no, so long as those perfections, which we have enumerated, belong to it, there is nothing wanting to make it capable of undergoing a Judgment. But,

The Soul of Man proved to be immaterial.

Secondly, To speak my own mind plainly and to come home to your satisfaction, I must tell you, That as for my part, I do not doubt but that the Soul of Man is properly and strictly of a spiritual Nature; so I am confident that those things which we have ascribed to it, do sufficiently prove it to be so; seeing it is impossible to salve those *Phænomena*, or to give any tolerable account of those great accomplishments and performances of the Soul before specified from meer matter, let it be modified or circumstantiated how it can.

Simple perception of Objects is of the lowest rank of humane perfections, and indeed is not proper to humane Nature, but common to Brutes; yet this seems impossible to be performed by meer matter. For the Eye, though it be a very admirable and exquisite Organ, can by no means be said to perceive the objects of sight, but only to transmit or present them to some perceptive power. It doth, I say, only as a Glass represent the Species or Image of the thing, which even a dead Eye or an hole, will in some measure perform; but it makes no judgment of the object at all, as appears by this, that

that all objects are tranſmitted, reverſed, or with the heels upward, through the Eye, and ſo left, till ſome higher powers ſets them right and on their Legs, and judges of their diſtance and other circumſtances.

Now if it be ſo, that matter thus advantageouſly diſpoſed and improved, as in the admirable Structure of the Eye, cannot perform that one act of ſimple perception, what ſhall become of all thoſe nobler actions of the Soul? and into what ſhall they be reſolved? Such as ſelf-motion, the ſtrange celerity of thought, memory of that which is paſt, prudence and forecaſt for that which is to come, and a thouſand other ſtrange operations. Is it imaginable that meer matter ſhould underſtand, argue, diſpute, conſider and confer the relation of one thing to another, and thence infer conſequences and make concluſions? It is likely that meer body and quantity ſhould be ſenſible of ſhame and honour; nay, be conſcientious too, and accuſe, condemn, and torture it ſelf; or which is moſt wonderful of all, check, controul, deny, limit, and mortifie it ſelf? He that will undertake to ſhew how all theſe things may be performed by Atoms and Motion only, is a ſubtil Mechaniſt indeed, and I do not doubt but at the ſame rate ſuch a Man may be able to make a new World, when he pleaſes, with the ſame Atoms as Materials. For it is evident, there is more intricacy in this little World of Man, than in the whole Fabrick of Heaven and Earth beſides.

Wherefore if matter or body cannot perform the aforeſaid Operations, then the Soul of Man, which doth perform them, muſt be

acknowledged to be a ſpiritual ſubſtance.

Bioph. In troth you talk very ſhrewdly; but for my life I cannot underſtand what you mean by this thing which you call Spirit, and therefore I reject the Notion as gibberiſh and nonſenſe.

Sebaſt. Softly, good *Biophilus*, what reaſon is there for that haſty concluſion? Muſt we needs deny every ſuch thing to be, as is hard to underſtand? Muſt we, like dull Boys, tear out the Leſſon that is difficult to learn? Is nothing true but what is eaſie, nor poſſible but what is facile? But beſides, let me tell you upon ſecond thoughts, there is not more difficulty in underſtanding the Nature of Spirits, than there is in conceiving how all the aforeſaid operations ſhould be performed with them, no nor half ſo much neither; ſo that nothing is gotten by the objection; for it is a very vain thing to object difficulty, when at the ſame time you are forced to acknowledge the thing to be neceſſary. But why, I pray you, what is the cauſe that ſpiritual ſubſtance is not as intelligible as corporeal?

Bioph. O Sir, there is a vaſt difference in the caſe, I can ſee and feel the latter, but ſo I cannot the former.

Sebaſt. Nay believe me, there you are out, you ſee and feel only the accidents of a bodily ſubſtance, but not the ſubſtance it ſelf, no more than you can ſee or feel a Spirit.

Bioph. Pardon me, at leaſt I ſee and feel the bodily ſubſtance by the accidents; that is, I am aſſured of its preſence and exiſtence, and I can affirm ſuch things of it upon that teſtimony of my ſenſes.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. And you may affirm as much of a Soul (if you pleaſe) though you can neither ſee nor feel it, foraſmuch as you plainly perceive the properties and operations of it.

Bioph. That is cloſe and to the purpoſe, I confeſs; but ſtill I cannot tell what to make of this thing called Spirit, for I can frame no Image of it in my imagination, as I can do of other things.

Sebaſt. Why, there is it now. I perceive now, *Biophilus*, you have a deſire to ſee with your Mouth, and hear with your Eyes. For as reaſonably every jot may you expect to do either of thoſe, as to frame a ſenſible imagination of a Spirit. That which we call Imagination (you know) is nothing elſe but the impreſs of the colour, bigneſs, or ſome other accidents (of a thing that hath been preſented to our ſenſes) retained in, and (it may be) a little diverſified by our phancy. But now if a Spirit have no colour nor bulk, nor ſuch other accidents to be repreſented to our phancy through our outward ſenſes, how is it poſſible you ſhould have an image of it there? No, no; ſpiritual Beings are only capable of affording us an intellectual Idea; namely, our higher faculty of Reaſon from obſervation of their effects and operations, concludes their Eſſence, and takes an eſtimate of their Nature; and indeed it is a flat contradiction to require any other evidence of that kind of Beings.

Beoph. This kind of Diſcourſe is very ſubtil, and I cannot tell what to object farther to it; go on therefore to your ſecond Branch, perhaps there I may better cope with you.

Sebaſt. The ſecond ſtep which I take to-

The natural Notions Men have of God, render it reasonable to expect that he will judge the World.

wards the proof of a Judgment to come, is, that as on the one side Mankind appears to be fit and capable of being judged hereafter; so on the other hand it is agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God, and to those Notions we have of a Deity, that he should call the World to such an account, and this appears briefly thus.

The most common and most natural Notion which Men have of the Divine Majesty, is, That he is a Being absolutely perfect, that is, (amongst other accomplishments) that he is a most powerful, wise, just and good Being; there is hardly any body that thinks of a God, but considers him under these Attributes and Perfections, and he that divests him of any of these Perfections, renders him neither an object of fear nor of love, and consequently not a God; insomuch that were it not for politick ends, namely, to avoid infamy or other punishment amongst men, doubtless those that deny to him any of these Attributes, had as good flatly deny him to have any Being at all.

Now if these things be included in the natural Notion of God, they not only capacitate him to be a Judge of the World, if he pleases, but give great assurance that he will do it; for if he be a wise Being, he cannot but see how things go, and particularly how his Creatures carry themselves here below; if he be powerful, he hath it in his hand to rectifie those disorders he observes amongst them, and both to punish the evil and to reward the good. And if he be good and just, it cannot but be expected from him that he will set things to rights

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one time or other, when his Wiſedom ſhall think fit; but it is evident, this is not done exactly and anſwerably to thoſe Attributes of his in this World, therefore there is no reaſon to doubt but he will aſſuredly doe it in another World; and therefore the Scripture tells us, *He hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, &c.

Bioph. Not too faſt, good *Sebaſtian.* I know not certainly what apprehenſions other Men may have; but for my part, though I do acknowledge a God (and that not only politically (as you ſuſpect) but upon the principles of Reaſon, yet I muſt profeſs to you, I do not think the natural Notion of God includes thoſe Attributes you ſpeak of. Why may there not be a God, and he only a neceſſary Agent, and then there is no danger of an after-reckoning with him?

Sebaſt. Ah, *Biophilus*, I am heartily ſorry to find ſo unworthy a Notion of God ſtill to find any room in your thoughts (though it were but in ſuſpicion only.) It is very certain indeed, that if he be only a neceſſary Agent, then all fear of a Judgment is diſcharged, and as certain that all Religion can then be nothing elſe but a groundleſs Superſtition at the beſt. For then God muſt needs be a very tame Deity which Men may play withall and abuſe at pleaſure, as the Frogs did by their wooden King in the Fable.

God not a neceſſary Agent.

But then, in the name of Goodneſs, what need is there of any God at all, if a neceſſary Agent will ſerve the turn? Why can we not as well ſuppoſe the World to be eternal, as

make ſuch a contemptible Being, as a neceſſary Agent is, to be eternal, only to give beginning to the World.

Or rather, why if we attribute one Perfection, *i. e.* Eternity to him, why not all the reſt, which ſeem to be inſeparable from it? For as much as it is not imaginable how the firſt Cauſe ſhould be the meaneſt of all, and he that gave thoſe other Perfections to other things, ſhould be deſtitute of them himſelf.

Or how can we believe that ſuch a fettered, impotent, unthinking and unwiſe Being, ſhould make a World in that Beauty and Perfection which this World conſiſts of? Or at leaſt how is it poſſible that a natural or neceſſary Agent (which is like a Gally-Slave chained down to his Bench, and confined to his Task and Subject) ſhould make a World with ſuch curioſity and diverſity of things, yet with that exquiſite order and harmony which we obſerve in Nature?

Do you think that the frame of things could not poſſibly have been any otherwiſe than they are? Can you fanſie that nothing could have been better nor worſe than it is now? If you ſee any footſteps of wiſedom or choice, any poſſibility that any thing ſhould have been otherwiſe than it is, you forego your neceſſary Agent.

Do you not ſee great and manifeſt inſtances of deſign and contrivance in the order of things, *viz.* one thing fitted to another, and one ſubordinate to another, and altogether conſpiring to ſome publick end and uſe? Now ſure a neceſſary Agent could not guide things ſo, becauſe it hath no ends or deſigns of its own.

Again,

Again, if God be a neceſſary Agent, I would fain be reſolved how it came to paſs that we are not ſo too? I think you granted me even now that we chuſe our own way, propound ends to our ſelves, and voluntarily purſue them, when we could (if we pleaſed) as freely chuſe and act contrary, and this we juſtly glory in as the perfection of our Nature. Now how to conceive that I ſhould be a free Agent, and that he who made me ſo ſhould be a neceſſary one; that is, that the effect ſhould be more excellent than the cauſe, neither I, nor (as I ſuſpect) any body elſe, can underſtand?

But I need not in this place induſtriouſly ſet my ſelf to confute this odd conceit of God's being only a neceſſary Agent, becauſe in my third Branch I ſhall fundamentally undermine it, and (as I think) leave neither colour nor pretence for it, and therefore with your leave I now haſten to that.

Bioph. Go on then in God's name.

Sebaſt. My third and laſt Point for the proof of a Judgment to come is this; God doth actually exerciſe ſuch a Providence in and over the World for the preſent as gives great aſſurance that he will judge it hereafter. For theſe are as it were the two ſeveral ends of the ſame Chain, a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter. They do naturally and mutually draw on each other. If there be a Judgment to come, there muſt be a provident Eye over the World for the preſent, in order to it; that is, God muſt ſo mind the World, that he perfectly underſtand how things go, how

There is an actual Providence in this world. Therefore there will be a Judgment in the next.

Men carry themſelves, what there is amiſs amongſt them, what requires puniſhment, and what deſerves a reward; otherwiſe he cannot be ſaid to judge, foraſmuch as without this it might rather be ſaid, There is a day of Execution coming, than a day of Judgment. And on the other ſide, if there be a Providence in this World, and it be true that God obſerves how Men carry themſelves towards him, it muſt ſpeak his intention to reward and puniſh hereafter in proportion to ſuch obſervation; for otherwiſe that Providence would be fruitleſs and to no purpoſe, it would be a meer matter of vain curioſity, and a needleſs trouble to the Divine Majeſty, as the *Epicureans* objected. But now that God doth exerciſe ſuch a Providence in this World, as from whence we may reaſonably preſage a Judgment to come, I think will abundantly appear by theſe three things.

1. There hath been ſuch a thing as we call Prophecy or Prediction of things before they came to paſs, which cannot be without a Providence.

2. There have been Miracles, which could not be without the Divine Interpoſition.

3. There are frequent (though not altogether miraculous) inſtances in all Ages of a Divine preſence in, and influence upon, the affairs of the World.

Prophecy a certain Argument of a Providence in the World.

1. Firſt, I ground the aſſertion of a Providence in this preſent World upon the Prophecies and Predictions of things beforehand, which have been verified by real effects in their reſpective times and ſeaſons. It is evident, that whoſoever is able certainly

certainly to foretel things before they are, muſt ſee through all the Series of Cauſes which produce ſuch events: Eſpecially if he define alſo the preciſe time and other circumſtances of the accompliſhment; but above all, whoſoever ſhall declare before-hand, not only what ſhall come to paſs according to the courſe of natural and neceſſary Cauſes, but alſo ſuch things as are caſual and contingent, or ſubject to the choice and indifferency of free and voluntary Agents, muſt have a mighty reach with him, and make a very curious and accurate inſpection into the Conjunctions and Conſpiracy of all things as well as into their particular Natures, Tendencies and Inclinations: For as every Effect muſt have its Cauſes before it can be, ſo the prediction of ſuch effect muſt depend upon a certain knowledge of thoſe reſpective cauſes which are pregnant of it; therefore if there ever have been ſuch a thing as Prophecy, there is a Providence.

Now for the matter of Fact, or that there have been certain and punctual predictions of things long before they came to paſs, is the conſtant belief of all Nations, and he that denies it muſt give the Lye to the greateſt and beſt part of Mankind. You may remember that *Tully* purſues this Argument in his Books, *De Divinatione*, and he there gives too many and too remarkable inſtances of it, to be denied or eluded; but I ſhall chuſe to ſet before you only two paſſages out of the holy Scripture to this purpoſe. For though I perceive you have not ſuch a reverence for thoſe Books as they deſerve, yet ſuch palpable matters of Fact as I ſhall inſtance in, and which were of ſo publick a con-

a concern and general notice, as whereupon the revolution of whole Nations depended, can afford no ground for calling in queſtion the hiſtorical Truth of them. And let me tell you, I make choice of theſe Inſtances out of thoſe Writings, for no other Cauſe but for the notoriety of the fact, and the eaſineſs of confutation, if it had been otherwiſe than true.

The former of the two paſſages is the Prediction of the ſlavery of the Children of *Iſrael* in the Land of *Egypt*, and their miraculous deliverance thence, above four hundred years before it came to paſs, and the accompliſhment (when the time came) anſwering the Prediction preciſely to a very day, ſo as to be obſerved by the whole body of the People, and the remembrance of it perpetuated by an anniverſary ſolemnity ever after, as you may ſee *Exod.* xij. 41.

The other inſtance is the Babyloniſh Captivity, which was foretold above ſeventy years before it came to paſs, and that in a time of the greateſt unlikelihood that any ſuch calamity ſhould befall; namely, it was propheſied of when the *Jews* were in the greateſt Peace and Proſperity. And then for the term of this Captivity, that was foretold to laſt ſeventy Years, neither more nor leſs; and both theſe periods, (as well as other circumſtances) were exactly, and to admiration, hit in the event of things.

Now in both theſe inſtances, the things were propheſied of ſo long before-hand, there were ſo many obſtacles in the way of their accompliſhment, and ſo much of the will of Man alſo intereſted in both the Caſes, and yet notwithſtanding ſuch punctual exactneſs is to be ſeen

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in the Event, that it is plainly impoſſible that humane wit ſhould ſo much as gueſs probably at them; therefore the Predictions muſt be grounded upon Divine intimation: And then God is ſo far from being a neceſſary Agent, that it is apparent he minds the World, and looks narrowly into all the parts of it, from one end to another, and governs and manages inferiour Cauſes.

Miracles neceſſarily argue a Providence.

2. My ſecond proof of an actual Providence in this World is from Miracles. By a Miracle I mean any thing coming to paſs, which is either for the matter or manner of it above the power of natural Cauſes, or at leaſt contrary to their eſtabliſh'd courſe and order; whether it be effected by heightning them above their ordinary pitch, or accelerating their motion, or by ſuddenly bringing thoſe cauſes together, which lay at a diſtance; or whether it be by depreſſing, ſuſpending or ſuperſeding any of them.

And I reaſon thus: If any thing have ever been brought to paſs above the capacity or out of the method of the natural and common Cauſes, then there is an active Deity which exerts his power in that caſe. Or if ever the courſe of Nature hath been interrupted, it muſt be by the interpoſition of the ſupreme Cauſe: For it is neither intelligible, that Nature ſhould go out of courſe of it ſelf, without its own decay and failure; nor poſſible that being once ſo out of courſe, it ſhould ever be able to recover it ſelf into its former order without the help of Omnipotency: Therefore if ever there have been a Miracle in the World, there is proof of a Providence.

Now

Now that ſuch extraordinary things, as we here ſuppoſe, have happened, cannot be doubted without great ignorance, or denied without impudence. I know there is a ſort of witty Men (in their way) who endeavour to put a ſlight upon Miracles, and therefore are very captious and critical in ſuch caſes as this; but if they can elude ſome occurrences that have been believed or pretended miraculous, yet they will never be able to evade them all. And if there have been but one acknowledged Miracle in all the time of this World, it will be ſufficient to prove a Providence. They will perhaps impute ſome Cures that have been ſaid to be done by Miracle, to the efficacy of ſome Medicine, although they can neither tell us what that ſpecifick remedy was, nor much leſs tell us how the Symptoms ſhould ſo ſuddenly ceaſe upon the uſe of it. It may be they will tell you in the general (with confidence enough) that the ſtrange things done in *Egypt* and in the Wilderneſs, were effected by the ſudden application of Actives to Paſſives; but cannot ſo much as pretend to ſatisfie any Man how ſuch remote Cauſes were brought together and exalted to ſuch an extraordinary degree of efficacy, as to produce ſuch admirable effects on the ſudden as thoſe Cauſes import.

Or if they could ſpeak tolerable ſenſe in ſome of thoſe particulars, yet what natural account can be given of the raiſing of the dead, or of unlearned Mens ſpeaking all kind of Languages in an inſtant? What natural Cauſe will they aſſign of the Sun's ſtanding ſtill in *Joſhua*'s time? Or of that preternatural Eclipſe at our Saviour's Paſſion? What could intercept the Sun's light when

when the two Luminaries were in oppoſition? Or what reſtored it to its motion again when it was interrupted, as in the former Inſtance? Or to its light again when it intermitted, as in the latter inſtance? To endeavour to give natural accounts of theſe things, will prove as abſurd and ridiculous to reaſon, as to deny the matter of fact, is void of Faith and Religion.

But if any of theſe inſtances will not paſs with ſuch Men, becauſe they were over long before our time, or becauſe the truth of them depends upon the Authority of Scripture; there are other innumerable paſſages in all Ages not liable to that Exception, that cannot be reſolved into any Cauſe leſs than a Supreme and Omnipotent. Amongſt which, what will they ſay to this which happens almoſt every Year? Namely, that after a long wet Seaſon, it ſhall ſuddenly clear up and be fair Weather again; and contrarywiſe after a long dry Seaſon, it ſhall unexpectedly be wet and rainy. Whereas if they look only to natural Cauſes, the quite contrary muſt happen. Foraſmuch as the more rain hath been at any time, the more may be ſtill, becauſe there are the more vapours from whence Clouds are raiſed; and the longer a dry Seaſon hath laſted, there is every day the leſs reaſon to expect rain, becauſe there want vapours out of which it ſhould be raiſed. Now to impute this ſudden and admirable change only to the Winds, is to beg the Queſtion; for it is well enough known, that the Winds depend upon Vapours as well as Rain; and to aſcribe it to the Stars, is to confeſs an humourſome reſolution, that right or wrong we will ſhut God out of the World. But this leads me to my

3. Third

More ordinary inſtances of a Providence in the World.

3. Third proof of a preſent Providence, *viz.* from the more frequent and ordinary inſtances of a Divine influence upon the affairs of the World. The effects of which, though they are not accounted miraculous, becauſe they are common, yet they give ſufficient indication of Divine Adminiſtration. And of this kind, there are ſo many which offer themſelves to an obſervant mind, that to ſeek flaws, and go about to make ſpecious objections againſt ſome few of them, will be rather an Argument of reſolved unwillingneſs to believe, than of any juſt grounds of Infidelity. For like as in a great Cable made up of ſeveral ſmaller Cords, if perchance ſome of the threds ſhould flaw or break, yet the remainder will be able to bear the ſtreſs of whatſoever uſe it ſhall be put to.

Now under this Head I reckon in the firſt place, as very obſervable, that there is ſcarcely any great thing ever brought about in the World, which God may not be ſeen to have an hand in; and that may be collected generally from the inadequateneſs of the viſible means to moſt notable productions: As when great preparations are defeated or laid aſide, and mean and inconſiderable ones do the buſineſs. This is that which *Solomon* obſerved long ago, *That the battel is not to the ſtrong, nor the race to the ſwift, nor bread to men of underſtanding:* And we cannot want an Example for it nearer hand, when we remember the Reſtauration of King *Charles* II: For it pleaſed God to deal in that particular, as he did by *Gideon*'s Army, when he diſmiſſed the greateſt part of the Forces,

ces, and did his buſineſs with a few, and thoſe very unlikely for ſuch an Atchievement.

But more admirable than this, is the preſervation of the holy Scripture in all Ages, both from total abolition by the flames of Perſecution; and from corruption, by the capricious phancies of ſuch Men as would neither ſincerely believe it, nor abſolutely reject it. Such alſo is the preſervation of the Chriſtian Religion, when all the wit and all the power of the World combined together againſt it; and ſuch was the ſucceſs of the Apoſtles in propagating that Religion, and planting the Chriſtian Church, when a few Fiſher-men leavened the World with a Doctrine quite againſt the grain of it, and naked Truth prevailed againſt Authority, Art and Intereſt in conjunction.

Hitherto alſo I reduce the maintenance of Magiſtracy and Civil Government; and I look upon it as a ſtanding evidence of a Providence, that the ſtrong bands of wicked and refractary Men ſhould ſtand in awe of a ſingle Man like themſelves, only becauſe he is inveſted with Authority. This, if it be duly conſidered, is very ſtrange, and can be reſolved into nothing but a Providence. Nor is it leſs ſtrange, that conſidering the great numbers of evil Men, their ſecrecy and cloſeneſs, their cunning and falſhood, their envy and neceſſity, their activity and ſelfiſhneſs, they ſhould be able to do no more hurt in the World than they do. Why do they not aſſaſſinate whom they pleaſe? Or what is the reaſon that they do not forſwear Men out of their lives and fortunes, and act whatſoever their revenge or covetouſneſs or luſt ſhall prompt them to? And no account can

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be given of this, but the powerful reſtraint of Providence.

Moreover, there are remarkable Examples in all Ages of evil Men dogged by their own guilt, and tortured by their own Conſciences, whenas no body elſe either accuſed or hurt them; and on the other ſide, as frequent inſtances of vertuous Men, who have been very comfortable under great difficulties, and whoſe Spirits have been born up with an admirable bravery under ſuch preſſures as would ordinarily cruſh and ſink other Men: And this, although the perſons thus carrying themſelves, were otherwiſe of no remarkable ſtrength or courage. Neither of which paſſages can be reſolved into any other Cauſes, than the mighty influence of a Providence.

Nay further, it is very obſervable, how ſtrangely ſometimes ſecret ſins are brought to light, eſpecially ſuch as Murder and Treachery, and where all Arts and Advantages were made uſe of for concealment; ſuch perſons becoming their own accuſers, when no body elſe could do it for them, and not unuſually their own Executioners too.

Above all theſe, there are ſome inſtances of vengeance befalling very flagitious Men, ſo ſignally, and with ſuch pat and ſignificant circumſtances, that (without any uncharitableneſs) we may be led by the ſuffering to the ſin, as in the famous caſe of *Adonibezek*, *Judg.* i. 7. whoſe barbarous uſage of threeſcore and ten Kings, cutting off their Thumbs and great Toes, and making them, like Dogs, gather their meat under his Table, was repaid upon himſelf in the ſame ſeverity. Of kind to which

are

are thoſe panick fears, and ſhiverings that oftentimes attend blood-guilty Men as long as they live: and though they may have eſcaped revenge from the hand of Men; yet this, as a *Cain*'s mark ſet upon them by the hand of God, indelebly ſticks by them, and follows them to their Graves.

It is needleſs to ſay any thing more on this ſubject, for as much as every Man that doth not wilfully ſhut his Eyes, may collect inſtances to this purpoſe, both from the Government of the World in general, and from his own Fortunes in particular. For beſides the quiet ſerenity and comfortableneſs (in token of the Divine favour) which uſually attends a vertuous courſe of life, and the anxiety, torment and uneaſineſs, which as frequently (in teſtimony of the Divine diſlike) attends a wicked and flagitious one; it is not a very unuſual, nor (to be ſure) an unpleaſant ſight, to behold the former crowned with ſignal ſucceſs and Worldly proſperity, and the latter puniſhed with ſhame and beggery: and this ſometimes ſhall happen in ſuch circumſtances, when there is nothing to which this different ſucceſs can be imputed but meerly Divine Providence, foraſmuch as the latter ſhall otherwiſe be more cunning for the World, and every whit as induſtrious and frugal as the former; but Divine Providence only makes the diſcrimination, whilſt the one is under the bleſſing of Heaven, and the other is apparently blaſted and curſed.

And now what think you, *Biophilus*, upon the whole matter: have I not acquitted my ſelf in all the three things I propounded? And now laying all theſe things together, is not

here ſufficient evidence to determine a prudent man in the caſe, and to ſatisfie him that there is a Providence in this World, and conſequently that there will be a Judgment hereafter?

Biophil. I cannot tell, *Sebaſt.* I confeſs you have ſaid many very conſiderable things, and ſome of them beyond what I could have expected in the caſe. But I have one main Objection, which eſpecially touches the laſt branch of your Argument, and which, if it ſtick by you, all you have ſaid will ſignifie nothing; but if you come clearly off from it, I ſhall not know what to think of the buſineſs. It is this, in ſhort: I do not ſee any ſuch ſettled and conſtant method in the management of the affairs of this World, as muſt neceſſarily argue a Providence; for in particular, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid it cannot be denied, that very often the beſt of Men are oppreſt and born down by ill Fortune; and contrariwiſe evil Men are very happy and proſperous: therefore it may ſeem that thoſe inſtances which you collect in favour of your opinion, may happen by chance, rather than by the diſpenſation of a Providence; and then if there be no Providence in this World, by your own Argument, there can be no Judgment hereafter.

A Vindication of Divine Providence in the obſcurity of ſome of its Diſpenſations in this life.

Sebaſt. If that be all, or the main of what you have to object, I am in hope to ſee ſome good iſſue of this Conference: for in the firſt place you know, that which is impeached by this Objection, is but one ſingle inſtance out of many which I have brought for the aſſertion of a Providence; and conſequently if this ſhould faik

fail, or if I ſhould yield you all that the objection pretends to, yet ſo long as the other are unſhaken by it, that great Doctrine may ſtand firm notwithſtanding; for it is but as if you ſhould pick one ſingle ſtone out of an huge building, or (as I ſaid before) find a flaw in ſome one thread of a great Cable, neither of which can weaken or endanger the one or the other. But then beſides, you cannot be ignorant that this which you now mention, is an old thred-bare exception worn out of all faſhion by the old Atheiſts and *Epicureans*, and which hath been canvaſſed and baffled over and over by Men of all Ages and of ſeveral Perſwaſions, by *Job*, by *David*, by *Solomon*, nay by *Tully*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and ſeveral others, that it is a great argument of the poverty of your Cauſe to be ſeen in it now-a-days, and may juſtly excuſe my labour in confuting it. However becauſe you think fit to give it countenance, I will briefly ſay theſe three things in the caſe, *viz.*

Firſt, That ſome meaſure of intricacy or obſcurity in the diſpenſation of Divine Providence, is no argument againſt it, but for it.

Secondly, That there are very great reaſons aſſignable why it may pleaſe the Divine Majeſty to proceed ſometimes indiſcriminately, and keep no conſtant viſible method in the diſtributions of good and evil in this preſent life.

Thirdly, Yet however this be ſometimes obſcure, there are at other times ſufficient and legible inſtances of a diſtinguiſhing Providence.

1. Some meaſure of intricacy in the diſpenſations of Divine Providence, is ſo far from be-

ing an argument againſt it, that it is a great argument for it. For if we do not make God a meer neceſſary Agent (which I hope I have ſatisfied you in) we muſt allow ſomething to his Prerogative and Soveraignty, and conſequently grant that he may do ſome things, becauſe he will do ſo, and whereof he doth not make us acquainted with the reaſons; and we may very well allow to his Wiſdom, to have a reach beyond us, and to have other meaſure to govern the World by, than we could have made for him. What, ſhall we call God to an account of his Management? Shall he not govern the World at all, unleſs he order it juſt as we would have him? This is apparently ſo far from being reaſonable, that it would be much more ſo to conclude on the contrary; namely, that if there were no depths in the Divine Counſel which we could not fathom, no Meanders in the way of Providence, which we could not trace, it would be very ſuſpicious, whether there were any thing of Divinity in the whole buſineſs. For if things were conſtantly managed one way without any variation, we ſhould be apt to think all was under the rigid Laws of a fatal Neceſſity. If on the other ſide there were no rule to be obſerved, no footſteps of any method, then we ſhould be tempted to think Chance ruled the World; but when we obſerve an intermixture of theſe two, *viz.* that there is a rule, though there be ſome exceptions from it, then we have reaſon to conclude, that all is under a powerful and a free Agent, who if he be alſo infinitely wiſe, cannot but ſee reaſon for ſeveral things which we cannot comprehend.

2. There

2. There are very great and weighty reaſons aſſignable why in this particular inſtance of Providence (namely, in the diſtribution of good and evil in this World) the Divine Majeſty ſhould not be obliged to gratifie our curioſity with a plain account of his proceedings, but make ſome exceptions to his general rule: amongſt which theſe following are conſiderable.

Firſt, Becauſe ſuch a conſtant and viſible exerciſe of diſtributive Juſtice, as your objection ſeems to require, would be ſuch an irrefragable and palpable evidence of a Providence, as would leave no room for the diſcovery of ingenuity or a vertuous diſpoſition? it would deprive Men of the liberty of their choice, whether they would be Atheiſtical, or devout and religious: and conſequently there would be no excellency in Piety and Vertue. For (as I have ſaid before in a like caſe) it would be no argument of love to God or Goodneſs, that a Man took care to ſerve and pleaſe God, if he conſtantly ſtood over us in a viſible and undeniable Providence; ſo as that every offender were taken in every fact, and preſently led to Execution; and on the other ſide, if every vertuous action were forthwith rewarded and crowned. In ſhort, it is not agreeable to the Mind of God to overrun the freedom of our choice, ſince he hath endowed us with it, nor to ſuperſede that diſtinctive faculty of our Nature; for ſhould he doe ſo, he ſhould act contrary to himſelf and to his own Glory, as well as to the nature and condition of Mankind.

Again, Secondly, A checkered and diverſified method of Divine Providence, wherein

there is an intertexture of prosperity and adversity in the fortunes of vertuous Men, tends more to their improvement than a more regular and constant Providence would do. For as a continued course of prosperity is too apt to tempt Men to be wanton and careless; so a perpetual series of adversity would be as apt to sink and depress their spirits: But a middle way of interchange in their condition, balances them on both sides, and maintains them in a more even temper and conversation. And for this reason it pleases the Divine Wisedom to make such false steps as you are apt to imagine them to be.

To which add in the third place, That herein lies the very secret of Divine Wisedom, and by this very way he doth most effectually assure us of the point in question (namely, a Judgment to come) in that there is such apparent necessity of it. For if the Divine Majesty should let the present World run at random, and interpose himself in no case to check the hurry, and punish the disorder, there would seem no reason to expect Justice from him hereafter, who gave no token of it all this while; and then on the other side, if he interposed so frequently and constantly as to leave no irregularity unpunished, nor any brave action unrewarded, there would be no business left, nor no need of a Day of Judgment. Whereas by affording us some plain instances of his discrimination in this World, we are satisfied that he minds how things go, and is able to judge; and yet by permitting several other things to run riot, and seemingly to be unanimadverted upon, he hath as it were cut out work for a Day of Judgment.

3. Not-

3. Notwithſtanding all this, as I ſaid before, there are ſome ſufficient and undeniable inſtances of a diſtinguiſhing Providence in this World. I have granted to you, that ſometimes the ways of God are intricate and involved, and I have offered at ſome reaſons of it, to which many others might have been added, and amongſt the reſt that by this means we may be kept humble and modeſt, and taught to admire and reverence God, rather than to judge or pronounce of him. For theſe, I ſay, and other reaſons beſt known to infinite Wiſedom, he thinks fit ſometimes to loſe us in the Meander of his ways; yet I ſay they are not always thus obſcure, but ſometimes he treads ſuch plain and direct paths, that we may eaſily follow him. And of this I have ſet before you ſeveral Examples already, and whoſoever will diligently attend to it, may eaſily collect more; but I will not omit to put you in mind of one great ſtanding one, and (as far as is poſſible) beyond all exception, and that was in the Hiſtory of the Jewiſh Nation, who were infallibly ſure to be happy and moſt remarkably proſperous ſo long as they ſtuck to the true God and the Laws he had given them by *Moſes*, and as ſure to be ſignally miſerable and calamitous, whenſoever they apoſtatized from their God, or debauched their Religion. So that that People was placed as a light upon a Mountain, and were an illuſtrious inſtance to all the World of that great Truth we are now diſcourſing of; and if there were no more inſtances of this kind, that alone would be ſufficient for the purpoſe.

Bioph. I muſt confeſs, if the ſtory be true,

there was a very ſtrange Fate attended that People.

Sebaſt. Fate, do you call it? What colour or preſence in the World is there for imputing thoſe admirable revolutions to Fate? Could blind Fate make diſtinction of Perſons and Actions, and apply it ſelf in the diſtribution of good or evil in proportion to Mens deſerts or miſcarriages? Do not diſparage your own diſcretion ſo much, as to uſe the word Fate in ſuch a caſe. No, aſſure your ſelf that was a ſignal diſplay of Divine Providence, and ſuch an one as you cannot expect or demand a greater.

Biophil. But if it were the effect of Providence, as you will needs have it, I wonder how it comes to paſs that there is no ſuch thing now; or why all the reſt of Mankind was neglected by Divine Providence, and only that People, and in that Age and Corner of the World, ſo carefully managed by it.

A viſible Providence over the Jews.

Sebaſt. O *Biophilus*, ask not God an account of his Prerogative, nor much leſs preſcribe to him how he ſhall govern the World. What if he pitying the dark ſtate of the World then, did ſomething extraordinary to relieve and inlighten it? And what if having once given ſuch abundant proof of himſelf, he ſhall think that ſufficient to all After-ages? Or, to ſay no more, what if it pleaſes him to make Faith in ſome reſpects more difficult now than it was then? Who ſhall expoſtulate the matter with him, eſpecially ſince he hath not left us deſtitute of ſufficient grounds to determine a prudent Man in the caſe? Which is all I have pretended to aſſert all this while, and I think I have made

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it good at laſt, though with ſome tediouſneſs of diſcourſe, for which I beg your pardon.

Phil. Dear *Sebaſtian*, do not ſlander our judgments ſo much, as to ſuſpect we ſhould think any thing tedious that is ſo much to the purpoſe. I thank you heartily for the pains you have taken with us; for although (I thank God) I have long lived under a firm perſwaſion both of a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter; yet I am greatly rejoiced to find all ſure under me, and when my reaſon encourages my devotion: And eſpecially I think my ſelf obliged to you for the ſatisfaction you have given my Neighbour; is it not ſo, *Biophilus*?

Bioph. I tell you plainly, *Sebaſtian* hath ſtaggered me, and I cannot tell what to ſay more for the preſent, but I will conſider further of it at leiſure.

Phil. Ay, but do it quickly, good *Biophilus*, you ſceptical Gentlemen are apt to take too long time to conſider of theſe matters; you know, die we muſt, and that ſhortly too, ſo that we have not any long time to conſider in; what an horrible ſurprize would it be, if whilſt we ſtand doubting and diſputing, we ſhould hear the ſound of the laſt Trump, and be ſummoned to that great Tribunal? When Death once arreſts us, there is no Bail will be taken, we muſt come to a ſtrict account, and await an irreverſible Doom, ſo that there is no dallying in this matter.

If either of us had intelligence that an Enemy were coming upon us with deſign to aſſault us and take away our life, although it were a perſon of but ordinary reputation that brought us the news, yet it would ſtartle us, and we ſhould

ſhould not ſtand diſputing the truth of the relation, but preſently either prepare our ſelves to appeaſe him, or arm our ſelves to encounter him; and then if no Enemy appeared, we could ſecurely expoſtulate the falſe Alarm afterwards. Or if there came a report, that the Sea had broken its banks, and overflowed the plain whereon our Houſes ſtand, I aſſure my ſelf that neither of us would ſtand gravely deliberating, whether it were poſſible or no, or cavilling about the neglect of repairing the banks, or leaſt of all loſe ſo much time as whilſt we could ſend Meſſengers, and expect their return, but firſt get us up to the Mountains, and there at leiſure inform our ſelves of the truth of all circumſtances.

When *Noah*, for no leſs than one hundred and twenty Years together, preached Repentance, and foretold a Floud coming to drown all the World, no queſtion but the generality of Men laugh'd at him as a timerous hypochondriacal Perſon: They could object how unuſual a thing it was he talked of, a thing that no Man had ſeen, or had ever happened to the World before: They would diſcourſe philoſophically in the Caſe too, and repreſent it as a very abſurd thing, to imagine that the water ſhould riſe above the Earth, and overflow the tops of their ſtately Houſes; for (might they ſay) where ſhall there be water enough to doe it? from whence ſhould it come? or how ſhould this Fellow have notice of it before all other Nen? And perhaps they would conclude, that at worſt they ſhould have time to ſhift for themſelves when they ſee it come in earneſt, and eſcape as well as others. Hereupon they

they ate and drank and feaſted and made merry, and laugh'd at that preciſe Coxcomb with his new Machine of an Ark: But ſo, ſaith our Saviour, *Shall the coming of the Son of man be.*

Alas, *Biophilus*, whilſt we dream, the Judgment ſlumbers not; whilſt we doubt and diſpute, God is in earneſt; and the time draws on apace, when Chriſt Jeſus, the Judge of the World, ſhall come *in the glory of his Father and of all the holy Angels*, the Heavens ſhall then melt away, and the Earth be on fire from one end of it to another; the dead ſhall riſe out of their Graves, and make an huge Aſſembly; the Books of all Mens Actions ſhall be opened, and the Devil together with every Man's own Conſcience, ſhall be the Accuſers. Then ſhall all thoſe that are conſcious to themſelves to have lived vertuouſly and holily, look up with joy and comfort to ſee their Saviour become their Judge; to find a vindication from all thoſe unjuſt cenſures that have paſt upon them here below; to come to an end of their labours, a reward of their ſervices, the accompliſhment of their faith and hopes. Lord, What joy will be in their countenances, what glory upon their heads! How the Angels ſmile upon them, and welcom them to their journey's end, and Heaven opens in an admirable Scene of light and glory to receive them!

But on the other ſide, all that are privy to themſelves to have lived wickedly, baſely and unprofitably, ſhall look pale and tremble, *and call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb that ſits upon the Throne*; for they ſhall ſee all black and diſmal about them, no tears will move pity, no Rhetorick

to ſick will perſuade, no excuſes will be admitted, no Appeal allowed, no refuge to be found, nor Reprieve to be hoped for; but they ſhall hear that dreadful Sentence, *Depart accurſed into everlaſting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, and ſhall ſee Hell open her mouth to receive them into unquenchable flames.

Bioph. I proteſt you ſpeak with ſuch feeling, *Phil.* that your diſcourſe hath more power upon me, than all the Arguments that ever I heard in my Life. And I know not what is the matter, but my heart trembles; therefore let me once more intreat you to adjourn the remainder of this diſcourſe till another time, and in the mean while I'll conſider of it, as I promiſed you.

Phil. Ah! dear Neighbour, do not prove like that unhappy *Felix* in the Scripture, do not go about to elude what you cannot evade; no, put not off this buſineſs a moment longer: Now that it ſeems God hath touched your heart, quench not his holy Spirit, it may be you will never be in ſuch a temper again, if you loſe this opportunity.

Bioph. I aſſure you I like this temper (as you call it) ſo well, that I do not deſire to feel more of it. But if you are reſolved to go on to torment me, I pray do me the favour firſt to anſwer me this Queſtion. If theſe things be ſo as you repreſent them, how comes it to paſs that Men, unconcerned about Religion, die as comfortably many times as any others? The reaſon of my Queſtion is this, becauſe you will pretend that whilſt Men are well in health, and ſwimming with the Tide of Proſperity, they

they may either artificially put off the thoughts of these things, though they be true; or the noise of business, and the caresses of their senses may obscure all apprehension of another World. But sure, when Men find themselves dying, and that there is but one way with them, it should be too late for them to flatter themselves, or to admit of the flatteries of others; then surely prejudices cease, and Men are at leisure to think: The glory of the World cannot dazzle their Eyes when it is leaving them, and they it: What then, I say, can be the reason if these things be true (which you speak so affectionately of) that there is not as remarkable a difference in Mens temper of spirit when they come to die, as there seems to be in their conversation whilst they are alive?

How it comes to pass that there is no greater difference in the last Act of mens lives.

Sebast. I apprehend your question very well, and the reasons of your asking it too. And for answer to it, I pray tell what is the reason that Men that love their health and their Estates both very well, will nevertheless be Drunkards and Whore-Masters and Gamesters, though they see by daily experience, that these are very sure methods to out them of both? You will tell me, I suppose, that they feed themselves with absurd and unreasonable hopes which fool their discretion, or that they are bewitched and besotted with those kind of pleasures, and so consider nothing at all. Why just so it is here, the things we speak of are undoubtedly true, and the miscarriage in them is fatal; but Men are careless and incogitant, and slip into the pit of destruction before they are aware? they

they live merrily, becauſe they never think of any thing, and they die as ſottiſhly as they lived.

Again, there is another ſort of Men that are captious and conceited, who will chop Logick, as we ſay, with God Almighty; they will have not only their reaſon ſatisfied, but their curioſity alſo, or they will not believe; they muſt ſee a Spirit and Heaven and Hell, or one muſt come from the dead to tell them News out of the other World, or they will not be contented. Now God will not indulge this humour of theirs, and they are reſolved to venture him, that is, they will be damned rather than forgo it.

Beſides, there are others take a great deal of pains to disbelieve, they will uſe all the Arts of Sophiſtry, all the tricks and evaſions of wit, intrench and fortifie themſelves in their Atheiſtical conceits; in a word, they will cheat their own reaſon, out-face their own Conſcience, and bring upon themſelves a ſtupid inſenſibility of all that is good and vertuous, and ſo, in concluſion, they die quietly, and go ſilently into the bottomleſs pit.

To all this you muſt conſider, that it is very probable that many of theſe Men may be very far from dying chearfully, though we are not able to obſerve their Agonies and Torments; for it may very well be, that when they once begin to conſider what a deſperate condition they are in, the very thoughts of that, together with their bodily diſeaſe in conjunction, preſently overwhelms their ſpirits, and makes their paſſage out of the World more compendious, but never the more comfortable.

But

But after all, you ſhall find ſome of the aforeſaid perſons, when they come to die, ſadly bewail their folly and careleſneſs of this kind; but where-ever did you hear of an holy and vertuous Man that ever repented of his choice or pains in Religion, or care of his Soul, and ſolicitude in preparation for this occaſion? It's poſſible indeed ſuch a Man may expreſs no tranſports, becauſe his Body is like other Mens, and the ſtrength of his diſeaſe may infeeble his ſpirits and cloud his reaſon, and ſo interrupt the exerciſe of his Faith and Hope. And on the other ſide, the prophane and irreligious Man, though perhaps (as you ſuppoſe) he cannot or will not diſſemble at the approach of death, yet he may be ſottiſh and inſenſible, and then whatſoever difference of ſtate they are entring upon, there may be no diſcernible difference in their departure hence; and ſo you ſee your queſtion will not ſerve to the purpoſe you propounded it for.

Phil. Come, *Biophilus*, leave theſe ſceptial artifices, theſe captious queſtions, do not ſeek out ways to muzzle your own Conſcience, or impoſe upon your reaſon; a Judgment there will be, and it is all the wiſdom in the World to be prepared for it. It is in your power by the grace of God to order matters ſo, that we ſhall rather hope and wiſh for it than fear it; and what vaſt odds is there between them two? You are ſenſible that it is only a Judgment following death, that makes death terrible, at leaſt to our minds and underſtanding. Indeed it's poſſible our bodies may be diſturbed at the aſſaults

The wonderful comfort and advantages of being ſecured againſt a day of Judgment.

aſſaults of it; but meer death can never ſhake our minds, or diſcompoſe one thought, if we are ſatisfied that all will be well after it: and what an happy and deſirable condition were it to be out of the reach of that King of terrours, to ſee light through that dark Vault of the grave, to out-live all a Mans fears, and to live to his hopes? What a ſtrange alteration will that one thing make in a Man's projections and deſigns, in his countenance and in his ſpirit, and in the whole management of himſelf; for who can be afraid of any other accident that hath no cauſe to fear death? Who will be concerned about riches, or be much diſcompoſed whether his temporal affairs ſucceed well or ill, that is provided for Eternity? Who will ſtoop ſo low, as to lay any ſtreſs upon fame and reputation, that hath approved himſelf to God and his own Conſcience, and can ſtand the ſhock of the great Tryal of the day of Judgment? He that is in a condition not to fear death, will have no reaſon to fear Men or Devils or Spirits or ſolitude or darkneſs, but may be as bold as a Lyon, and cannot probably be tempted either to expreſs a mean paſſion, or to do a baſe action; to be ſure he will crouch to no body, flatter and humour no body: for no body can hurt him, and ſo his life is eaſie as well as comfortable, foraſmuch as he hath no body to pleaſe but God and his own conſcience.

But, as I was ſaying, this is to be prepared for; Salvation is not a matter of courſe, nor the Judgment a meer piece of ſtate and formality, but infinitely ſacred and ſolemn; the Judge s wiſe and holy and juſt, the Tryal ſtrict and ſevere,

ſevere, the Doom irreverſible, the Miſery intolerable, if a Man miſcarry, as well as the Felicity unſpeakable, if he ſtand right at that Tribunal: and to all this the critical time draws on a-pace; we feel our ſelves daily dying, therefore it concerns us to do what is to be done out of hand.

Bioph. I am convinced that it is the wiſeſt courſe to provide for the buſineſs you ſpeak of, if it could be done without too much trouble.

Phil. Ah! *Biophilus*, can any care be too great in ſuch a concern? Can any thing ſeem troubleſome that may at once ſecure us from all other troubles! But the trouble is not great neither, it is but being ſincerely and heartily religious, and all is done.

Bioph. That is ſoon ſaid, I confeſs, but not ſo ſoon done. Beſides, I am never the wiſer for ſuch a general advice; for there are ſo many Religions in the World, that it's hard to know which to truſt to. Some ſublime Religion to ſuch a heighth of Spirituality (as they call it) that a man cannot tell what to make of it; and again, ſome make no more of it than honeſt Morality. Some dreſs it up ſo fine and gawdily with ſo many Trappings an Ornaments, that it's hard to find what the naked truth of the thing is; and others render it ſo plain and courſe, that a man is tempted to deſpiſe it. Some repreſent it ſo thin and ſubtile, that a Man's reaſon can take no hold of it; and others propound it ſo groſly and abſurdly, that a Man had need have a good ſtomach to it, or he could not digeſt it. Some make it a a very eaſie thing, a

The different repreſentations of Religion, a great temptation to Sceptiſm.

trick of Wit, a mere Notion, but the becoming of a Party, or a bare believing; nay, a peculiar Garb, an Hair Shirt, or a Friar's Girdle doth the buſineſs. With others it is a matter of infinite difficulty, and hath ſo many nice and ſtrict obſervations belonging to it, that they are able to diſcourage any pretence to it. In a word, it ſeems to me to be what the Painter pleaſes, foraſmuch as I ſee ſome deſcribe it out of the pleaſantneſs of their own ſanguine fancy, and others out of the black humor of their hypochondriac paſſions: So that upon the whole matter, I think I had as good maintain my own Character, and withhold my aſſent till men are better agreed amongſt themſelves upon the Point.

Sebaſt. God forbid, *Biophilus*, for that you cannot do, unleſs you will adventure to be damned, as certainly you muſt, if you be found to be of no Religion.

Bioph. Why, have you leſs charity for men of my temper, than for all the World beſides? Muſt a Sceptiſt be certainly damned, if there be a Judgment?

Sebaſt. Far be it from me to be uncharitable towards any men, if I could help them; but I muſt tell you, I have leſs hope for that man that hath no faith at all, than for him that hath a bad one; and it muſt be a very bad Religion indeed that is not better than none. For though by reaſon of the variety of Perſwaſions (which you take notice of) a man may be fatally ſo miſled, as to periſh in a blind Devotion; yet certainly he that is ſo phantaſtically wiſe, as to be of no Religion at all, cannot be ſaved. But what need is there of either of theſe? There

are

are a great many falſe Religions, it is acknowledged, but there is a Truth too, and that not ſo hard to diſcern as you repreſent it, if a man ſincerely apply himſelf to the ſearch of it.

Bioph. Now you have nickt the buſineſs, you think, as if every Country had not the true Religion, or every man's own perſwaſion were not the truth, at leaſt if they be allowed to be their own Judges.

Sebaſt. Good *Biophilus*, do not jeſt in theſe matters. I know you are a witty man; but do not turn the edge of it againſt your own Soul. Come, I'll tell you a Religion that all the World ſhall agree in, and my Soul for yours, you ſhall be ſafe, if you will comply with it. Do not ſtare, it is no more but this, *live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world*; or if you will have it in other words, reſolve with your ſelf not to do that thing (whatever come of it) that you cannot anſwer to God and your own Conſcience, and do every thing within your power that may approve and recommend you to both, and thenceforward fear not a day of Judgment. *A ſure Religion.*

Bioph. Now you ſpeak to the purpoſe indeed, that I muſt needs ſay is good counſel, and ſuch as I think all the World is agreed in; therefore I thank you for it, and I will try to follow it.

Phil. God proſper your reſolution, *Biophilus*. And now, *Sebaſtian*, that we are happily come to this Point, I pray give me leave to put *Biophilus*'s queſtion a little more home to you. I thank God I am ſenſible of the great day approaching, and make ſome conſcience of being

provided for it; but becauſe I would not for all the world be miſtaken in my meaſure in a buſineſs of that moment, I crave the aſſiſtance of your judgment how far that care extends, and particularly what it compriſes. The reaſon of my ſollicitude herein (beſides the conſequence of the thing it ſelf) is, becauſe I have heard it delivered as a ſtanding Rule by ſome men, That the only ſure preparation is, that a man live every day as if it were the laſt he had to live. Which Doctrine hath often raiſed ſcruples in my mind, and I ſuſpect it may have had the like effect upon others; and to tell you my thoughts plainly, I look upon it as unpracticable and inconſiſtent with the common affairs of life; for moſt certainly on that day, which I thought would be the laſt I ſhould live, I would not fail to diſmiſs all other buſineſs whatſoever, I would ſcarce eat, or drink, or ſleep, but wholly apply my ſelf to acts of devotion. Now if that Rule be true, Religion is a more anxious thing than I was aware; and it it be not true, I pray make me underſtand what is the truth in this matter.

Scrupulous and fantaſtical rules of preparation for the day of Judgment reproved.

Sebaſt. I do not know why you ſhould lay much ſtreſs upon my judgment in ſuch a caſe; but if you will have my opinion, it is plainly this, That the Rule you ſpeak of is far more devout than judicious; for as you well obſerve, ſince God Almighty hath cloathed our Souls with Bodies, and placed us in a world of buſineſs, it cannot be that he ſhould expect we ſhould in the whole courſe of our lives ſo ſingly and ſolely apply our ſelves to the affairs of another

nother World, as we ſhould think fit to do juſt when we are going off the Stage, and ſolemnly preparing our ſelves for an immediate appearance at God's Judgment-ſeat. If therefore thoſe men (you ſpeak of) had preſcribed that we ſhould every day think of the Day of Judgment, as not knowing how ſoon it may be upon us, or that we ſhould take care every day to advance in our proviſion for it, they had delivered a great and a neceſſary Truth; but when they ſpeak as if they meant, that we muſt do nothing any day, but what we would do, if we were ſure it were our laſt day, they thwart the very order of Divine Providence in the condition of Men, and the conſtitution of the World; they condemn the practice, and call in queſtion the ſtate of the beſt of Men; they lay a ſnare for the Conſcience of the weak and timorous: and in a word, they obtrude an impracticable Notion for the moſt concerning and neceſſary Truth.

But you are not to wonder, or be troubled at it. For though there is generally more defect of devotion than of knowledge in the World, yet there are ſome particular Men wherein the former exceeds the latter, and ſuch Men pleaſe themſelves in a pretty ſaying, without being able to judge of the prudence of it; and whilſt they go about to awaken ſome ſecure and careleſs perſons to a ſerious ſenſe of their eternal concern, are not aware that they afford matter of everlaſting ſcruple and offence to thoſe that are truly tender and conſciencious.

It were eaſie to give you ſundry inſtances of this ſuperfine high ſtrained Divinity; but there is one I will mention for its affinity with that

before us, *viz.* you ſhall find it dogmatically delivered by ſome ſeeming great Caſuiſts, That in certain and indiſputable things, it is a Man's Duty to do that which is beſt of the kind, and in uncertain and controverted caſes to take the ſurer ſide. Now if theſe things were laid down as prudential advices only, to direct a Man which way to incline himſelf, they were very uſeful; but to make them expreſs meaſures of Duty, is to make more Laws than God hath made, and condemn more things for ſin than he condemns, and conſequently cannot chuſe but imbroil the Conſciences of men. For ſuppoſe Prayer be better than ſecular buſineſs, then upon this Principle I muſt turn *Euchite*, and ſpend all my time in Devotion. Suppoſe there be fewer temptations in a Monaſtick life than in common Converſation, then every one that is careful of his Soul muſt retire into a Cloiſter. If there be difficulties attending Magiſtracy and publick Employment, then I muſt fold up my hands, and do nothing but go into my Cell, and pray God to amend the World, though I be called to the other. If bodily Exerciſes and Games have ſome ſnares in them, I muſt allow my ſelf no recreations; nay, I ſhall be put endleſly and anxiouſly to diſpute, whether it be better to give a poor Man two pence, or a ſhilling, or five ſhillings, *&c.* whether I ſhall pray three times a day or ſeven times a day; whether an hour or two hours. And indeed every thing I go about will afford inextricable difficulties upon theſe Principles.

But that by the way only: As for the buſineſs in hand, trouble your ſelf no farther than to live every day well, and to be ſure to do

nothing

nothing you cannot anſwer; be always getting ground, and growing better and better; as near as you can, do every day ſomething that may turn to account another day, and then comfortably await God's time.

Phil. I thank you heartily both for your direct anſwer and your digreſſion: and I pray pardon me, if I come a little cloſer to you yet. I know you live under a comfortable proſpect of the Day of Judgment, and I am confident you neither would nor could enjoy that even tranquality, if you were not upon ſure grounds. Now my requeſt is, that you will be ſo free with me, as to make me acquainted with your whole management of your ſelf: For though I have a rule to walk by, yet for fear I ſhould miſapply it, and either through Superſtition and Scrupuloſity overgo it, or by the careleſneſs of my own heart, fall ſhort of it, I ſhould be very glad to have an example to interpret it to me.

Sebaſt. I clearly perceive you either love me too much, or know me not ſo well as I thought you did, in that you think of making me your example. Alas! *Phil.* little do you think how many follies and infirmities I labour under, and as little what qualms and dejections of ſpirit I ſometimes feel within my ſelf.

Phil. I confeſs, I do not know you ſo well, but that I deſire to know more of you; and though it be a great thing I ask of you, that you ſhould abſolutely unboſom your ſelf to me; yet you that have done me ſo much good already, I hope will not deny me this advantage of your converſation.

Sebaſt. Ah! dear *Phil.* you may command

me any thing; but I tell you my life hath too many blots in it for you to make a Copy of: in truth, ſuch a precedent will indanger to make you too remiſs.

Phil. Now you diſcourage me more than ever, and make me ſuſpect that it is an harder thing to be ſaved than I imagined, ſince you find ſuch difficulty in it.

Sebaſt. Good *Phil.* excuſe me from ſaying any thing of my ſelf; but (if it were not too tedious for this time) I would give you the Hiſtory of an holy Friend of mine, which I had from his own mouth, and that I aſſure my ſelf will be of more uſe to you, than what you ſeem ſo paſſionately to deſire.

Eulabes's *Hiſtory of his own Life, and preparations for Judgment.*

Phil. Of whom do you mean?

Sebaſt. Of my dear Friend *Eulabes*, now with God, a Perſon of as great Sanctity of Life and comfortableneſs of Spirit, as Earth can eaſily admit of.

Phil. I have heard much of the Fame of his Piety, but I never had the happineſs to know him. For God's ſake, let us have his Story, ſince you will not gratifie me in my firſt requeſt.

Sebaſt. I remember the time well when I made much the ſame requeſt to him, which you have now done to me. And he, after he had for a good while modeſtly declined, giving me ſatisfaction therein (by ſuch excuſes as it is not neceſſary I ſhould now repeat, and I had replied to them as well as I could;) at length yielding to my importunity, he bengan thus:

" Dear Friend (quoth he) though from the " firſt date of our acquaintance our converſa-

" tion

" tion hath been ſo intimate, and my breaſt " hath been ſo open to you, that I ſcarcely " know any thing by my ſelf that you have not " been privy to; yet becauſe you are pleaſed to " entertain the curioſity to enquire farther after " me, I will not ſtick to tell you as well what " happened to me before the commencement " of our friendſhip, as alſo ſuch things as (in " regard they paſſed only betwixt God and my " own Soul) may be unknown to you, though " they were teanſacted ſince.

" Know then, (ſaid he) that about ſuch time " as I had out-grown the mere follies and infir- " mities of my youth, and began, together with " the advance of my bodily ſtrength and vigour, " to make alſo ſome eſſays of underſtanding and " diſcretion, I quickly found that by the Spring- " tide of my bloud, and the great encreaſe of " bodily ſpirits, ſeveral very impetuous paſſions " and inclinations boiled up in me, notwith- " ſtanding thoſe ſmall efforts which my reaſon " (as yet) could make to the contrary.

" This I then thought (and do ſtill) to be a " caſe common to other men with my ſelf; and " ſince I have conſidered of it, I am apt to think " that our wiſe Creator ſo ordered the matter, " that theſe two Combatants, Senſe and Reaſon, " ſhould grow up and enter the Liſts together, " to the intent that as Reaſon ſhould not be " without its Antagoniſt to hold it in play: ſo " on the other ſide, thoſe bodily powers ſhould " not be left without a Guide to conduct, con- " troll and manage them.

" However, hereupon bodily inclinations " growing daily ſtronger and ſtronger, and my " Reaſon and Conſcience not being yet foiled

" or

" or corrupted, there aroſe a very ſtrong con-
" flict in me between them, and that as yet of
" very doubtful iſſue; foraſmuch as both be-
" ing parts of my ſelf, I could not eaſily reſolve
" which ſide to incline to.

" In the mean time (as God would have it)
" calling to mind the ſolemnity of my Baptiſm,
" I remembred that then when I was dedicated
" to Chriſt, and entred as a Candidate of Eter-
" nal Life, I had renounced the fleſh with the
" affections and luſts. Hereupon therefore I
" reſolved to withſtand them if I could, and
" to this end begged the aſſiſtance of God's
" Grace, and (by the advice of my Parents
" and thoſe good perſons, who having been
" Sureties for me, had a deſire to diſcharge
" their Conſciences of that Truſt which lay up-
" on them) I applied my ſelf to the Biſhop for
" Confirmation. Whereby having obtained not
" only the Bleſſing of my Spiritual Father, but
" made Chriſtian Religion now my own act
" and choice; and beſides, had put ſuch a pub-
" lick obligation upon my ſelf, as would render
" it very ſhameful for me to go back or retreat,
" I from that time forward was under a more
" awful ſenſe of God and Religion, and felt fre-
" quent motions of the Holy Spirit within me.

Here I remember I a little interrupted him, applauding his ſingular felicity in being ſo early ingaged in the way of Heaven, by which means that courſe was now grown habitual to him, and his accounts much eaſier at the day of Judgment.

But he proceeded, ſaying, " It is true indeed,
" it was God's great Goodneſs to awaken me to
" a ſenſe of my Duty thus early, as I have told
" you;

" you; but then what by the allurements of
" pleaſures, which have always too poinant a
" reliſh with younger years, what by ingage-
" ment in buſineſs which grew upon me after-
" wards, and what through the contagion of
" example, which ſurrounds a man with too
" common inſtances of careleſneſs in theſe
" weighty matters, I was drawn off from any
" cloſe attendance upon Religion, until it plea-
" ſed God in his wiſe Methods of Grace to lay
" his hand upon me in a dangerous fit of ſick-
" neſs; and this partly, as it ſtained all the beau-
" ty of the World, which heretofore allured me;
" partly alſo, as it mortified and enfeebled thoſe
" bodily powers which before were too potent
" in me, but principally as it gave me leiſure
" and inclination to recollect my ſelf; I there-
" upon (ſeeing nothing but death before me)
" fell into a great concern for another life, and
" ſo by degrees came to a ſolemn reſolution of
" making Religion my chief buſineſs, and took
" all the care poſſible, that ſo I might be prepa-
" red for the great day of Trial.

" Now becauſe this is the point which (I per-
" ceive) you enquire after, I will acquaint you
" with the method I purſued; and to deal faith-
" fully with you (as I hope I did with my own
" Soul) the ſtreſs of my preparations lay in theſe
" three things.

" Firſt, Becauſe I was ſure that an holy life
" muſt needs be the beſt Paſs-port for the other
" World; therefore I conſidered how I might
" keep my ſelf cloſeſt to my Duty, and walk in
" all the Commandments of God as blameleſs
" as it was poſſible.

" Secondly, becauſe I knew that I had failed

" here-

" heretofore, and feared I ſhould again in ſeve-
" ral things fall ſhort of my Duty; therefore I
" bethought my ſelf how I might do ſomething
" extraordinary, if not to make up thoſe de-
" fects, yet to ſhew at leaſt the ſincerity of my
" love to God and Religion, and the value I
" had for the World to come.

" Thirdly and principally, In conſideration of
" the Purity and Juſtice of God, and the ſtrict-
" neſs of his Laws, I deſired and endeavoured
" to intereſt my ſelf in the Satisfaction and In-
" terceſſion of my Saviour.

" For the firſt of theſe, namely, the appro-
" ving my ſelf to God in the integrity of an
" holy life, I conſidered that Eternal Life not
" being a thing of courſe, or naturally due to
" men, but the ſingular gift of God, our hopes
" of it and title to it muſt depend upon the per-
" formance of ſuch conditions as he ſhould think
" fit to impoſe, and foraſmuch as no Man can
" know God's mind, and what he will be plea-
" ſed with, unleſs he himſelf reveal it; there-
" fore, in the firſt place, I did not content my
" ſelf with humane Writings and Moral Diſ-
" courſes, nor much leſs to conform my ſelf to
" the meaſures and cuſtoms of the World, but
" ſet my ſelf daily and diligently to ſtudy the
" holy Scriptures, and took the meaſures of my
" Duty, and the rule of my Life thence. And
" to this I joined daily and earneſt prayer, that
" it would pleaſe Divine Goodneſs not only to
" make me underſtand his Will, but guide and
" enable me to perform it; that he would pre-
" ſerve me from prejudices, from inadverten-
" cy, from fooliſh opinions and raſh actions:
" and this I performed not cuſtomarily and for-
" mally,

" mally, as if I complemented God Almighty,
" but with my utmoſt vigour and intention of
" ſpirit, and never thought I had acquitted my
" ſelf therein till I found my heart warmed with
" its own motion.

" More particularly, becauſe I found that
" hard ſtudy and ſicklineſs of body, had made
" me ſomewhat ſubject to the diſorders of the
" Iraſcible (as heretofore health and plenty had
" inclined me to the Concupiſcible;) therefore
" I vehemenly implored the Divine Grace for
" my relief, and have been frequently conſtrain-
" ed to allay a ſtorm or paſſion with a ſhowre of
" tears.

" Beſides this, I took ſpecial care to keep out
" of vicious and licentious Company, which I
" was confident if it did not taint me with ſome
" ill example, would be ſure to cool my heat,
" and abate my edge to Religion: and contra-
" riwiſe, I contrived as much as poſſible I could
" to keep ſuch Converſation as was likely to
" provoke and inflame me in the courſe I had
" propounded to my ſelf.

" And leſt all this ſhould not be ſufficient to
" ſecure me of my intentions, every Evening I
" erected a petty Tribunal within my ſelf, and
" called my ſelf to account for the day paſt, if
" I had ſlipped any opportunity of doing or
" receiving good; if any raſh word or action
" had eſcaped me; if any earthly or ſenſual af-
" fection had been ſtirring in me; if I had been
" guilty of any inſtances of injuſtice, that here-
" after might riſe up in judgment againſt me,
" I repented and made my peace with God and
" Man, as far as it was poſſible, before I ſlept. I
" examined my ſelf alſo what progreſs I had

" made

" made that day towards Heaven, whether, now " I had ſpent a day of my life, I was a days " Journey onward of my way, and what I had " to ſhew for the expence of that day, I always " took, as I ſaid, the Evening for this buſineſs, " both in regard of the privacy and quiet of " that Seaſon, and alſo becauſe I found that " then the ſolitude and darkneſs of the nights " were eaſie, and the ſleep comfortable when I " had firſt cleared all ſcores; and beſides, I " was cautious, leſt the interpoſition of ſleep " ſhould have made me forget the paſſages of " the former day, if I had deferred the account " of them till the next.

" Beſides all this, I found it neceſſary (and " accordingly practiſed) to ſet one day aſide in " every month, and more ſolemnly and wholly " dedicated it to this buſineſs, to romage my " own heart, to compare my ſelf with my ſelf, " and to obſerve how much I advanced in my " great deſign.

2. " The ſecond part of my care (as I told " you) was to efface thoſe errors of my life, " which had either wittingly or unwillingly " eſcaped me. Now to this purpoſe, I was very " deſirous to do ſome exemplary good things, " that I might lift up the head, and raiſe the " ſpirit of Piety in the World; and the rather, " to the intent, that if I had done any hurt by " ill example formerly, I might, when I could " not revoke the act, yet prevent the contagion " of it. And beſides, I was watchful of, and " gladly embraced all opportunities of demon- " ſtrating the ſincerity of my love to God, " though it was by a coſtly or difficult ſervice; " for, I made no doubt, but the more there was

" of

" of ſelf-denial in a vertuous action, the greater " was the evidence of Grace and Divine Love " in performing it. Upon this account I could " well have been content it would have pleaſed " God to have given me a juſt occaſion of ſome " ſmart, but tolerable ſufferings for him; and " with this proſpect I have put my ſelf upon " ſome meaſures of Charity that were to the " very utmoſt of my ability, if not beyond it; " I have interpoſed my ſelf voluntarily for the " reſcue of ſome deſolate and oppreſſed perſon " from a potent Adverſary, and thereby deri- " ved the trouble upon my ſelf which I protect- " ed that perſon from; I have put my ſelf for- " ward to reclaim ſome peeviſh deluded Secta- " ry, or ſome vicious perſon, from whom I have " had very ingrateful treatment for my good " will, that by all or ſome of theſe I might " ſhew that I loved God as well as my ſelf: not " that I had any proud conceit or opinion of " Supererogation in any thing I could do or ſuf- " fer; ſo far from it, that I am ſenſible, that " when I have done all I can, I muſt acknow- " ledge my ſelf an unprofitable Servant, and " that I have not done ſo much as was my Duty " to do. Notwithſtanding, as a Subject, that " hath been in Rebellion againſt his Prince, or " ſome way or other diſobliged him, will be " glad to be employed in the moſt difficult ſer- " vices, that he may ſhew his Loyalty, and re- " cover his Favour: So I who was ſenſible, that " in many things I had offended the Divine Ma- " jeſty, could not chuſe but prize an occaſion of " doing ſomething more than matter of ſtrict " Duty, that I might ſhew, that nevertheleſs I " loved him: And indeed it ſeems to me, that

" thoſe

" thoſe who pretend ſo much modeſty and hu-
" mility, as to be ſcrupulous of over-doing in
" this manner, are only in reality afraid of loving
" him too much, which I am ſure is impoſſible.
" And therefore I find that ſuch free-will Offer-
" ings give a Man's heart great aſſurance, and
" enable a Man to look with the more comfort-
" able erection of mind towards God and the
" day of Judgment. So I obſerved *Nehemiah*,
" *Chap.* 13. *verſ.* 14. when he had ſhewed himſelf
" publick ſpirited, and generouſly and with con-
" ſiderable difficulty and hazard to himſelf had
" aſſerted the intereſt of the oppreſſed Jews and
" their Religion, he then with an holy confidence
" addreſſes himſelf to God in theſe words, *Re-*
" *member me, O Lord, for this, and wipe not out*
" *the good deeds which I have done*, &c. This, I
" take it, is *laying up in ſtore a good foundation*
" *againſt the time to come*, this is, *making friends*
" *of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when we*
" *fail, they may receive us into everlaſting habita-*
" *tions*. Such actions, I ſay, either of Piety or
" Charity aforeſaid, are as it were the drawing
" a Bill upon God Almighty, to be paid in the
" other World, and making a wiſe and frugal
" Purchace of a Reverſion in Heaven.

" Wherefore (as I told you) I ſtudied all op-
" portunities, and conſulted the utmoſt of my
" ability to do ſome remarkably good things,
" that might be beneficial to the World or to
" Religion when I was dead and gone, and en-
" deavoured to ſow ſuch ſeed as whoſe fruit
" ſhould by the grace of God be freſh and laſt-
" ing to the very day of Judgment.

3. " But when all was done, I laid the great-
" eſt ſtreſs of all upon the third and laſt part of
" my

" my preparation, and that was in intereſſing
" my ſelf in the Satisfaction and Interceſſion of
" my Saviour. For beſides the many and great
" failings I was ſenſible of, I conſidered alſo the
" purity of the Divine Nature was ſuch, that
" *he found folly in his Angels*, and deteſted ſin
" where-ever he found it; that his Law was
" ſtrict and perfect; that it was impoſſible any
" thing ſhould be acceptable to ſuch a Majeſty,
" or make amends for the breach of ſuch a Law,
" but that which was perfect too; that nothing
" could make atonement for ſin but a Lamb with-
" out ſpot; that nothing could ſucceſsfully in-
" tercede for us but the only Son of God. There-
" fore I ſet an infinite value upon the diſcovery
" of the Light and Grace of the Goſpel, I with
" all heartineſs and thankfulneſs embraced the
" Terms of the new Covenant, I endeavoured
" to affect my ſelf with the higheſt ſenſe of love
" and gratitude towards my Lord Jeſus Chriſt.
" I pleaded his Sacrifice in my Prayers, I fed
" my Faith with his Blood, I raiſed my hopes
" by having ſo powerful an Advocate with the
" Father, I comforted my ſelf againſt the accu-
" ſations of the Devil and my own Conſcience,
" and all my black and melancholy thoughts, by
" the conſideration, that he was appointed Judge
" of the World, that was in humane Nature,
" who had been ſenſible of our infirmities, had
" experience of our temptations, and had ſo
" much good will to us as to die for us. I ac-
" knowledged and adored his Divinity, I con-
" feſſed him before Men, I gloried in his Croſs
" and Sufferings, I frequently obſerved the Me-
" morial of his Death and Paſſion in the Sacra-
" ment, I joined my ſelf to his Church, I ho-

" noured his Miniſters, I reverenced all his In-
" ſtitutions; and in a word, as the higheſt and
" trueſt honour I could do to him, I endeavour-
" ed to be like him, by imitation of his ſince-
" rity, purity, meekneſs and goodneſs, in confi-
" dence that upon theſe terms he would own
" me when he comes again in his glorious Ma-
" jeſty.

" This (ſaid he) hath been the courſe and
" care of my life, from ſuch time as I became in
" earneſt ſenſible of the concern of another
" World, and this is the ſumm of my conſtant
" preparations for the Day of Judgment; and
" in this poſture I endeavour always to be found
" whenſoever God calls me. I confeſs I ſhould
" be right glad (if it pleaſed God to give me
" opportunity) to make ſome more ſpecial and
" particular preparations againſt the approaches
" of death, if I could be aware of it, and to trim
" and ſnuff my Lamp againſt the Bridegroom
" comes; but for that God's will be done; how-
" ever by his Grace I hope I ſhall not be utterly
" ſurprized nor diſmayed, having made this ha-
" bitual proviſion for it. Thus far he.

Phil. Your Friend *Eulabes* appears to have been a moſt exemplary, holy, and a wiſe Man, and the relation which you have given us, as from his own mouth, exceedingly fits the Character of ſuch a Perſon, for there is both a lively Spirit of Piety breathing in it, and withall ſuch a becoming and proportionable modeſty, as ſufficiently aſſures the real truth of the whole Narrative, foraſmuch as I cannot ſuſpect you would impoſe upon us herein; nor can I believe it eaſie (if

Eulabes *his more ſpecial preparations for death towards the approaches of it.*

(if poſſible) for an evil Man to draw a Scene of Vertue with ſo many Arguments of probability. For my own part, I have been all along ſo affected with it, that nothing hath grieved me ſo much, as that you ſeemed to draw towards an end of your Story, as well as the good Man to the end of his Life. And now I have a thouſand Queſtions, which I would gladly put to you further about him, but that I am afraid of being too troubleſom to you, eſpecially ſince it grows late. However I pray pardon me whilſt I interrogate you a little about the laſt Act of ſo brave a Perſon. I rember you ſaid he intended, if God gave him opportunity, to make ſome more particular and ſpecial preparations at the approaches of death; now I have a great curioſity to inquire, whether it pleaſed God to afford him ſuch opportunities as he wiſhed, and what uſe he made of them? Gratifie me in this, and I will detain you no longer at this time.

Sebaſt. Why therein, dear *Phil*, I will ſatisfie you as well as I am able. You muſt know therefore, that *Eulabes* having through the courſe of his whole life maintained a ſtrict temperance, and now well advanced in years, it happened to him (as it is uſual in ſuch caſes) by the good Providence of God, to have a gradual and leiſurely diſſolution; he was neither racked to death by the intolerable pains of the Gout or Stone, nor hurried out of the World in the fiery Chariot of a violent Fever, nor ſtabbed by an Apoplexy, nor ſtupified by a Lethargy, but was mildly and gently ſummoned by a lingring ſickneſs, ſo that inſenſibly he felt himſelf dying. By this means he had both time,

ſtrength and underſtanding to ſettle every thing according to his wiſhes. When therefore he ſaw the Harbingers of death draw on towards him, and that he could not long maintain the little Fort of life againſt the Confederate force of ſo many infirmities as beſieged it, he then diſpoſed himſelf for a Surrender.

In the firſt place, having formerly in better health made his Will, and ſetled his temporal Affairs, he now diſmiſſed all buſineſs, forbid all impertinent talk, all troubleſome Viſitants, and diſcharged his Phyſicians alſo, as finding no farther uſe of them; and forthwith ſent for the Phyſician of his Soul, the Miniſter of his Pariſh, a plain, hearty and ſincerely good Man. And he being come, my Friend addreſſes himſelf to him, giving him hearty thanks for all the pains he had taken in the courſe of his Miniſtry in that place to do their Souls good. Wherein (ſaith he) it hath pleaſed God ſo to order it, that you have often come home to my caſe, and touched the very diſtemper of my heart, as if you had been within me; for which I humbly thank Almighty God, and again and again thank you, and pray God reward it in another World.

Now, Sir, (proceeded he) that great Judge of all the World is calling me to account of all the actions of my Life; I have therefore ſent for you to audite them before-hand, that ſo by your aſſiſtance I may either know my Errours, and repair whatſoever is amiſs, whilſt yet I have a little time left me to do it in; or if I have ſtated my matters rightly, may appear with the better aſſurance at that Tribunal. I have always found you faithful in your Doctrine, and

and I do not doubt but you will be impartial in this application.

At this point I offered to go out, and leave them private; which he perceiving, took me by one hand, and the Miniſter by the other, and then continued his diſcourſe. I will give you (ſaid he to the Miniſter) the Hiſtory of my life, at leaſt I will not conceal from you any main paſſage of it, be it for me or againſt me, that ſo you may paſs a judgment upon my ſpiritual ſtate; and I deſire you, my dear Friend *Sebaſtian*, to be preſent, who have been privy to the moſt critical moments of it, to the intent that you may witneſs againſt me before this Man of God, if I falſifie in any thing. This ſaid, he laid open the courſe of his life, and amongſt ſeveral other things, which either I do not now ſo well remember, or think not fit to repeat, he delivered the ſubſtance of that, whereof I have given you a large account before; and then he conjured him in the Name of God to deal freely and plainly with him upon the whole matter.

The holy Man (like a Jury, in a manifeſt caſe) without long deliberation quickly brought in a Verdict of comfort to him. Which when *Eulabes* perceived, with his Eyes fixed upon him, and a countenance ſomewhat cheared; Well, ſaid he, God be thanked, if it be ſo, as I hope it is; for I reſt aſſured Almighty Goodneſs deſpiſes not the meaneſt ſincerity. But I humbly and earneſtly beſeech you, Sir, give me alſo the Abſolution of the Church, that I may go out of the World under the comfort of ſo publick and authentick a Teſtimony. Which when the Miniſter had ſolemnly performed, he intreated

treated him further to administer to him the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that so (said he) seeing as it were my Saviour Crucified before my Eyes, and pouring out his Blood for Sinners, I may the more firmly believe the pardon of my own sins, and upon the Wings of Faith and Affection raise my self towards Heaven.

This, after the interposition of Prayers and Meditation and holy discourse, was administred to him; but, Lord, what an Ecstacy of devotion was the good Man now in! What tokens of humility, affection, thankfulness and intention of mind were then to be read in his countenance and deportment! most certainly Christ Jesus was present really, though not carnally, and his Soul fed it self most savourily upon him. These things being done, he dismissed the Minister for that time, not without real expressions of his thankfulness to him for his pains and assistance, nor without a liberal alms to be disposed at his discretion amongst the Poor, earnestly intreating him to remember him constantly in the Prayers of the Church, that thereby he might be holpen on his Journey towards Heaven, where he hoped shortly to arrive.

Some time after this, when by some repose he had recovered a little strength, his Family was called together to his Beds-side, with some others of his Friends and Relations; all whom he most earnestly cautioned against looseness of life, and profaneness of spirit, assuring them in the words of a dying-Man, of the great reality and infinite importance of Religion; he charged them, as they would answer it at that great Day which was certainly coming, that they should not suffer themselves either to be debauched into careless-

leſneſs and lukewarmneſs, nor abuſed and cheated into phantaſtry and opinionativeneſs in Religion, but perſiſt in the good old way, reverence their Miniſter, keep to their Church, and make the ſerving of God the greateſt care and buſineſs of their lives. Then he diſcourſed admirably to them of the vanity of the World, the uncertainty of Life, the comforts of Religion, and the joys of Heaven, till his ſpirits began to be ſpent, and his ſpeech a little to faulter. At other times he retreated into himſelf, and entertained converſe with God by Prayers and holy Meditations, in which what are the elevations of his Faith, what the holy raptures of his Love, what humble abjections of himſelf at the feet of Chriſt, what reſignations of himſelf to the Will of God, what pleading of the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and recumbency upon the Interceſſion of his Saviour, we could not be privy to farther than as we ſaw his hands and eyes earneſtly lift up to Heaven, ſometimes a ſtream of tears falling from his Eyes, and other times interchangeably a chearful ſmile ſitting upon his countenance; in which poſture bodily ſtrength being now exhauſted, he with a gentle ſigh reſigned up his Soul to God.

Thus I have given you the laſt paſſages of this good Man (now no doubt in Heaven) if I have not tired you with the relation, though I confeſs I am not very apt to ſuſpect that, both becauſe I have done it in compliance with your deſire; and beſides, I judge of other Men by my ſelf, and becauſe I am never weary of thinking or ſpeaking of him; therefore imagine other Men may be of the ſame mind.

Phil.

Phil. Ah! Sir, ſo far from being weary of ſuch kind of Diſcourſe, that I could willingly have forgot all other things for it, and been glad this Evening-Conference had continued till to Morrow Morning; but I conſider Devotion muſt not too much intrench upon Civility; therefore I return you my hearty thanks for my good Entertainment, and take my leave for this time.

Bioph. I thank you both for your good Company, and your charitable Offices towards my ſatisfaction, and I do already aſſure you of this fruit of it, that by your Converſation I have learnt that all Religion is not acting a part, and playing the Hypocrite, which I was apt to ſuſpect heretofore; for I ſee you are ſo really hearty and in earneſt in it, and yet Men of greater ſagacity than my ſelf, that I tell you truly I begin to think it becomes me ſeriouſly to conſider of it. Good Night to you, good *Sebaſtian.*

The End of the Second Conference.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

By *J. GOODMAN*, D.D.

Φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρῆσθ' ὁμιλίαι κακαί.
Ex *Menand.* in *Thaide.*

Evel Communications corrupt good Manners, 1 Cor. 15. 33.

LONDON,
Printed by *J. L.* for *L. Meredith*, at the *Angel* in *Amen-corner*, 1692.

IMPRIMATUR.

C. Alſton, R. P. D.
Hen. Epiſc. *Lond.*
à Sacris.

Jan. 10.
168⅘.

TO THE

READER.

THE Papers before thee contain a Relation of a Third Conference, between the ſame Perſons who held the two former, (which were made publick about two Years ſince.) And this is purſuant of the ſame general Deſign that was then laid, namely, to raiſe the rate and ſubject of Mens Converſation, and to bring religious Diſcourſe a little more into faſhion: than which nothing can be more gentile and manly, nor any thing either more uſeful, pleaſant or graceful, when once Men are accuſtomed to it, and know how to manage it with an equal temperature of affection and gravity.

The ſpecial matter of the preſent Conference is jointly to repreſent, as well the prudence and comfortableneſs, as the juſt reaſon and neceſſity of Religion.

And whether that great Point be here made out with that clear evidence which ſuch a Subject deſerves and requires, muſt be left to thy judgment.

But if I ſhall not be thought too much a Party to interpoſe my Opinion, I profeſs ſincerely that I verily think both the intereſt of Piety and of comfortable living are hereby conſiderably promoted.

And as for the Perſons that ſpent their Winter-Evening *in this manner, I can aſſure thee, that they are ſo well ſatisfied in this employment of their time, that (though probably thou wilt never here more of them in Print, yet) they are reſolved to continue this courſe privately among themſelves; as finding it to be both more delightful, and more profitable, than either* Coffee-Houſe-*Club or* Tavern-*Aſſignations.*

That which I am to requeſt of thee at preſent is, That thou wilt conſult thy Reaſon and Conſcience in the Peruſal of theſe Papers, and (for the time at leaſt) lay aſide Drolling Wit and Phantaſtry: For I am well aware, that if thou canſt find in thy Heart to trifle in ſo ſerious a Concern, thou mayſt raiſe a Prejudice in thy ſelf and others againſt what is here preſented: for that temper will eaſily apprehend ſeveral little things to play upon in this way of writing.

But if thou wilt uſe that Candour with which the former Eſſays of this kind were entertained, thou wilt then look attentively at the main Deſign, and finding that to be both pious and generous

generous, diſpoſe thy ſelf to made ſuch allowances for Circumſtances as uſe to be made to private Converſation amongſt Friends and Neighbours, conſidering that in thoſe Caſes Men uſually ſpeak *with almoſt the ſame ſecurity that they* think.

There is one thing more which I am obliged to Preface on the behalf of Sebaſtian ; *That whereas in the proving to* Biophilus, *That there is a God, and in explicating the Divine Nature, he hath made uſe of two or three Metaphyſical Terms, thou wilt not impute it either to his Affectation of hard words, or much leſs think that he takes Sanctuary in obſcure Phraſes: but rather conſider that it was impoſſible to avoid them without multiplying words, and ſo drawing the Argument out at ſo great a length, as would have been much more inconvenient than that which thou complaineſt of.*

I add no more, but heartily commend this little Book to thy acceptance, and thee to the Grace of God, and the comforts of his Holy Spirit.

Farewel.

The

The Characters of the Persons in the following Conference.

Sebastian, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all occasions of engaging those he converses with, in sobriety and a sense of Religion.

Philander, a Gentile and Ingenious Person, but too much addicted to the lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the Life to come: and therefore consequently was much concerned for the present Life. Till at length awakened by the discreet reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

The ARGUMENT of the Third CONFERENCE.

Sebaſtian *and* Philander, *two very good Men and intimate Friends, meeting together at the Houſe of* Biophilus, *(in purſuance of a former Reſolution taken between them) under the Allegorical diſguiſe of a Journey to* Urania, *begin to talk warmly of Religion and another World.* Biophilus, *who had never yet entertained any ſerious Apprehenſions of thoſe matters, wonders at their Diſcourſe, which he eſteems to be no better than Romantic, and profeſſes his Suſpicion, that either Wine had heated them, or Enthuſiaſm had tranſported them. Both which groundleſs conceits of his, when* Sebaſtian *had effectually confuted, he then proceeds to make a twofold Effort upon* Biophilus, *to bring him into the ſame ſenſe of things with himſelf and* Philander. *In the former he attacks him where he thought he was moſt acceſſible; and upon the account of prudence, and the common concern of ſelf-preſervation, preſſes him to a regard of Religion, as that without*

without which no Man can either live or die comfortably. And when by this means he had in ſome meaſure diſpoſed him to be ſerious, he then in the ſecond place repreſents to him the whole Scheme of Religion, and now renders it as rational in it ſelf, as before he had ſhewed it to be prudent and important. Hereupon the Sceptical Gentleman, after abundance of ſhifts and evaſions, is at laſt brought to a non-plus. *And thenceforth begins to enquire very modeſtly into the nature of Religion in general, and of the Chriſtian Religion in particular; which when* Sebaſtian *had alſo inſtructed him in, he promiſes to ſtudy it diligently for the time to come. Then* Sebaſtian *and* Philander *leaving him under that good reſolution, entertain one another with very pious and uſeful Diſcourſes, partly of the neceſſity of conſtancy in Religion, and the conſiderations that will maintain it, partly of the means of obtaining and preſerving an even temper of ſpiritual comfort, throught the whole courſe of a chriſtian life. And ſo the Night parts them.*

A Win-

A Winter-Evening CONFERENCE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

Sebaſtian, Philander, Biophilus.

Sebaſtian. WELL met again, Gentlemen; I hope we ſhall one day meet in Heaven.

Philander. God grant it, good *Sebaſtian*; and truly for my part, I am perſwaded we ſhall the ſooner come there, the more we have of your Company and Converſation in the mean time.

Sebaſt. No Complements, *Philander*; I am glad to obſerve you ſo chearful.

Come, Gentlemen, what think you of our Journey, I hope by this time *Biophilus* is reſolved; you promiſed, Sir, to conſider of it.

Biophilus. I have conſidered a little, but in truth I think Winter no good time for travelling, eſpecially for the undertaking of ſo long a Journey.

Sebaſt. Be not diſcouraged, Sir, the Journey is not ſo long as perhaps you may fanſie it to be; and the way is ſo very good, that it is but taking up a good Reſolution, and we ſhall be there preſently.

Phil. Nay (if I miſtake not) we may make ſome conſiderable advance that way, even as we now ſit by the Fire-ſide.

Bioph. You talk merrily, *Phil.* like a Man that hath travelled all the World over in a Map, and yet never went beyond the Smoke of his own Chimney.

Winter and Old Age are peculiar Seaſons for the buſineſs of another World.

Sebaſt. You will think it ſtrange perhaps, but it's very true, that no time ſo good as Winter for this Expedition; the ſhort days, dark and cold nights, the very dirt and wet, and all the ſeeming diſadvantages of the Seaſon (which probably may run in your Head, *Biophilus*) all make for our purpoſe. The Severities of the Weather which conſtrain us to lay aſide other buſineſs, give us the more leiſure to attend this; the ſhort days are followed with long evenings, which afford us opportunity to ſet things in order, to diſcourſe together, and to inſtruct and animate

animate one another in our intended Enterprize; and in the dark ſolitary Nights (our minds being then free from the diſtraction of variety of Objects) our thoughts will run this way with wonderful ſpeed, if we do but direct them right. So that (as *Philander* ſaid) in truth we may ſo order it, as to make real progreſs towards our deſigned Port, even as we ſit here.

Bioph. Nay, if *Philander* have ſuch a Voucher, I know not what to ſay; but in earneſt, I am ſomewhat too old and craſie to undertake the Journey.

Sebaſt. Nay, believe me, the older the better. An old Man, if he ſet to it in earneſt, will out-ſtrip all others in this Voyage; ſuch Men will loſe no time in trifles, experience hath taught them caution, and made them very wary of all diverſions and impediments, and they have leſs clog of fleſh and bloud about them. In ſhort, ſuch Men are ſo ſenſible of the inconveniences of this our preſent Countrey, that it is great odds, but they will put on ſo vigorouſly, as to get to their Journey's end before the youngeſt of us all. Beſides all which it is very conſiderable, that the older and more infirm any Man is, the more need he hath of the relief of that benign and wholſome air, and to be at reſt in that quiet and peaceable Region of *Urania* *, whither we are going.

* *See Conf.* II. P. 125.

Bioph. I ſee you are too many for me

at this way of Drollery; but now that I know whereabouts you are, I must be forced to tell you plainly, that (though I very much esteem your Company) I am sorry you are fallen again upon this Romance of *Urania*: Is it not time to lay aside this new kind of Knight-Errantry?

Sebast. You may remember, *Biophilus*, (by what passed between us at our last meeting) that by *Urania* we mean nothing less than the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and by taking a Journey thither, we (consequently) intend nothing else than *Religion* and a devout Prosecution of happiness in another World. Now therefore if you will not be perswaded to bear us Company in the Expedition, yet can you find in your Heart to reproach either the end or the means (as you seem to do) the former under the contemptible name of a Romance, and the latter by that of Knight-Errantry?

The Vanity of this World, and reality of that which is to come.

What, in the Name of God, do you call Realities, if these things be Romantick? As for the present World, it is notoriously a mere piece of Pageantry, and all the glory of it passes away in a vain shew; and if in it self it were not altogether so inconsiderable as experience shews it to be; yet humane life is so very short, that a Man can be little more than a Spectator of that Pomp as it passes by him. For by that time he begins to live, he more than begins to die. Either therefore there must be another Life and a World

to

to come in reality, or elſe nothing at all is ſo, but all is Romance indeed.

Bioph. I cry you mercy, if I uſed an indecent Expreſſion. I did not intend to give any offence, nor is it either my temper or cuſtom to put affronts upon other Mens Perſwaſions; but I appeal to you (*Sebaſtian*, as a Man of Judgment) what name ought I to call that thing by, of which (when I hear Men talk confidently of) I have notwithſtanding neither any ſenſe in my own Mind, nor ſee any rational ground to believe it.

Sebaſt. I acknowledge your Civility, good *Biophilus*, and in anſwer to your queſtion, I tell you truly, that without any offence to me you may call that thing by what name you pleaſe, of which no rational account can be given (let Men talk as confidently of it as they will) provided you have taken full Information about it, and have ſo maturely and impartially conſidered of it, that you may be thought a competent Judge in the Caſe: But otherwiſe, let me tell you, you may happen to call ſome of the moſt certain truths in nature by ſome ſuch opprobrious names; foraſmuch as ſome very certain things may on the ſudden, and at the firſt glimpſe, ſeem not only mere Paradoxes, but utter Impoſſibilities; which yet afterwards, upon more deliberate inquiry, will abundantly confute that cenſure by their own evidence.

Serious Conſideration neceſſary to Religion.

And even in ſenſible Perceptions, you

know it is not ſufficient that a Man have eyes in his head, but there muſt be a fit diſpoſition of thoſe eyes, a proper *medium* or well diſpoſed air, convenient light, due diſtance of the Object, and competent time for our ſenſes to ſurvey and take hold of it, or elſe we ſhall make no true eſtimate of that which is preſented to us. Now if you transfer this to Religion, and imitate the ſame care and caution in judging of that, you will doubtleſs be ſo far from concluding it to be a Romance, that you will find it not only recommended to you by the wiſedom and experience of all the World, but agreeable to the reaſon of your own mind, and to the internal ſenſe of your own Conſcience. And which is more, you will obſerve the belief of thoſe things whereupon it is founded, to be ſo neceſſary, and of ſuch moment and conſequence, as that they will appear to be the very Pillars of the World, the Bond of humane Society, and the very things wherein your own neareſt and moſt peculiar intereſt is involved; inſomuch, that it will be utterly impoſſible that you ſhould either live or die comfortably without an hearty perſwaſion of them.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak like your ſelf, and I underſtand you, but I hope I underſtand my ſelf better than to be willing to be reputed an enemy to Civil Society, or much leſs to be an enemy to my ſelf; let me therefore ſee thoſe two things (which you laſt mentioned) clearly made out, and

and (without farther trouble to you) I ſhall think my ſelf obliged to take new meaſures, or at leaſt to make more diligent inquiry into this affair.

Sebaſt. Though I ſhould have been right glad to have found you better reſolved, and hoped that this preſent Conference ſhould rather have been directed to the incouraging one another in our courſe, than ſpent in diſputing our Port; yet in hopes that at length you will become a Votary for the *Holy-Land*, I will comply with your deſires, and repreſent to you the evidence of thoſe two things you inſiſt upon.

The danger of irreligion to Civil Society.

And for the firſt, you will eaſily be ſenſible of the influence of Religion upon Civil Society, when you conſider how inconceivable it is, that mere external force or fear of humane Puniſhment ſhould be ſufficient to keep the World in order, when (as it often happens) that lewd and flagitious Men ſhall find themſelves either ſecured from that danger by the ſecrecy of their Plots, or protected by their ſtrength and multitude. And then you muſt acknowledge that to the ends aforeuſed there is a neceſſity that ſome ſuperiour power not only protect Governours from violence, but alſo ſtrike the minds of Men with an awful Apprehenſion of them as his Favourites and Vicegerents; but this cannot be done but upon ſuch Principles of Religion as we now ſpeak of: therefore he that infringes that, weakens both Law and Government;

and is an Enemy to Civil Society.

Again, there can be no Obligation of Oaths, and consequently no security of Faith and Trust between Man and Man, but upon supposition of a God that takes notice of what Men do, and who will call them to an account accordingly in another World: so that the Man who is destitute of these Perswasions, can neither give security of his Loyalty to his Prince, nor of Fidelity to his Friend or Neighbour, or any Man he deals with.

Bioph. Why, I pray you, *Sebastian*, may not Men trust one another upon the security of honour, good nature, or gratitude, or some such Obligation, without those fetters of Conscience which you speak of?

Sebast. Alas, alas, *Biophilus*, all those bonds which you mention are too weak to restrain the licentious humour of Mankind; they may put some little byas upon Mens Spirits, but they cannot bridle their Passions, curb their desire of revenge, nor prevail with them to deny their extravagant Interests and Inclinations, when they shall have an opportunity to gratifie any of them, as we find by daily experience. For in all the Obligations (below Religion and Conscience) a Man is supposed to be accountable only to himself; and therefore may dispense with himself, and acquit himself upon what terms he pleases. And therefore wise Men, and especially wise Princes, use not

to

to truſt to any of thoſe defeiſible ſecurities, but only to that of Religion.

Bioph. Well, but have not pretenders to Religion play'd faſt and looſe with Laws and Government, as well as other Men? Nay, generally you ſhall obſerve, that a Bigotted ſort of Men are the Principal Conſpirators and Actors of moſt of the Tumults and Diſorders in the World.

Sebaſt. If I ſhould object to you the daily and horrible Violations of Faith amongſt the pretenders to Honour, Ingenuity and Gratitude; I know you would anſwer me, That thoſe Perſons were not really Men of Honour, *&c.* but only pretenders. And ſo you may anſwer your ſelf in this caſe, namely, That they are but pretenders to the real Principles of Religion, that falſifie their Faith and diſturb Government.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you, That the very Bonds of Religion are not able always to reſtrain the rage and folly of ſome exorbitant Perſons; yet certainly it is the moſt powerful means amongſt Mankind to that end, and incomparably beyond all thoſe you have named, for the ſake of that reaſon I have already given you. And therefore (as I was about to ſay) you may remember, when upon occaſion, *Ptolomy* King of *Egypt*, ſent one *Theodorus*, in the quality of his Embaſſadour, to *Lyſimachus*: this latter refuſes to treat with him, or admit him under that Character, becauſe he was reputed an Atheiſt;

Atheiſt; and being ſuch, he look'd upon him as a Perſon with whom there could be no ſecurity of civil intercourſe.

Bioph. I remember the Story, but I pray you then (by the way) if *Lyſimachus*'s Objection againſt *Theodorus* was ſufficient, how came *Ptolomy* notwithſtanding to truſt him with the management of his affairs?

Sebaſt. Truly I can give you no other Anſwer, but that it ſeems he did not well underſtand the looſe tenure of an Atheiſt, nor had ſo much prudence as his Neighbour. But let that paſs, if you pleaſe, and give me leave in the next place to repreſent to you every Man's perſonal concern in the truth of Religion, which is ſuch (as I intimated before) that no man can either live or die comfortably without it.

Bioph. I, with all my heart. Let Princes and States alone to manage their own matters. Shew me but that one Point you laſt mentioned, and it ſhall ſuffice in the preſent caſe.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you will eaſily apprehend, that no Man can die chearfully without the ſupports of Religion (I mean if he die ſenſibly, and with his wits about him) becauſe the very beſt of ſuch a Man's Game, and the ſumm of his expectations can be but this, That he ſhall die like the Beaſt, and that vital principle in him, which we call the Soul, ſhall be abſolutely extinguiſhed: ſo that he

he ſhall thenceforth as perfectly ceaſe to be what he was, as if he had never been. Now this I ſuppoſe you will readily grant me, muſt needs be not only a very uncomfortable proſpect, but ſuch a condition as a Man cannot think of without juſt abhorrence, nor be reconciled to, without as great a Contradiction, as it were for him to be ſuppoſed to hate his own being, which ſurely is impoſſible.

Death very uncomfortable without the ſupports of Religion.

Yet (as I ſaid) this is the very beſt of the irreligious Man's caſe, and that which he can never be ſecure, will be the worſt that ſhall befal him; for if it ſhall prove in the iſſue of things, that there is another World (and at leaſt it may do ſo for ought he knows) then his caſe is ſo much worſe, as that now by death he muſt enter upon an eſtate for ever, which he hath had no foreſight of, nor made any preparations for. He encounters a God, whom he hath taken no care to propitiate towards himſelf in all the courſe of his life, by any acts of Piety and Devotion, and what a diſmal plunge muſt the approaches of Death (together with ſuch a ſurprizal) of neceſſity put ſuch a Man into?

Bioph. As for Death, I ſhall eaſily grant all you ſay, for that is no very comfortable thing at the beſt; the only refuge I know, is to make a vertue of neceſſity, and ſeeing die we muſt, to take it patiently: but for that reaſon I am reſolved to live as long as I can, and as chearfully too,

too, and why may not this be done without the buſineſs of Religion?

No Man can live comfortably, but upon the grounds of Religion.

Sebaſt. In truth, *Biophilus*, the impoſſibility of living comfortably, without the helps of Religion, is every whit as evident as that of dying ſo, and for the very ſame reaſon, foraſmuch as whatſoever renders Death terrible, muſt needs make life uneaſie too. For ſince Death is acknowledged to be unavoidable, it cannot chooſe but run continually in ſuch a Man's Head, Shortly I muſt die, and either Everlaſtingly ceaſe to be, or (which is far worſe) begin to be Eternally miſerable: The leaſt of which two things (without the miſerable refuge of a perpetual Debauch to keep ſuch a Man from thinking) muſt be of force enough to make his Heart ake, and to ſpoil all the pleaſures of the preſent Life: Eſpecially conſidering withal, the uncertainty of the tenure, and the innumerable accidents of humane Life; which laſt circumſtance makes it to become juſt matter of fear at all times, that by ſome or other of thoſe accidents of Mortality, his frail Thread may abruptly be broken; and conſequently who knows but by to morrow, not only all his Projects and Contrivances, but all his Delights and Entertainments will ſuffer a total Interruption.

But then, if there be a God and another World (which he can never be ſure that there is not) then he can expect nothing leſs than very ſuddenly to fall under the vengeance

vengeance of that great Majeſty whom he hath always provoked and never appeaſed.

The cauſes of the timorouſneſs of Atheiſts.

Beſides all this, as we commonly obſerve, that Atheiſtical Perſons are of all Men the moſt timorous; ſo there is great reaſon for it, if we conſider what a dark and melancholy thing it muſt needs be, for ſo impotent a Creature as Man is, to live in a World without a God, and without the ſecurity of a Providence: for there are a thouſand things confeſſedly too ſtrong for us, and which are able to cruſh and deſtroy us every moment. And in this caſe where a Man hath no help in himſelf, if he have no Guardian about him neither, if (I ſay) he cannot look up to ſome higher Being as his Patron and Protector; it were mere madneſs to be Valiant: for all the grounds of Courage fail him, and therefore no wonder if his Spirits be broken and baffled by the danger of his Caſe, and the loneſomeneſs of his Condition.

Late E. of Roch.

Upon which account a Perſon of Honour, and a great Witt of this preſent Age, acknowledged ſome time before his death; "That, although he for his part, "had no feeling of the comforts of Reli-"gion, yet he accounted thoſe to be hap-"py Men, that could, and did live under "the advantage of it. For indeed life is not life with thoſe ſupports which that (and that only) affords us. But when a Man hath, by the benefit of that Holy prudence,

dence, put all his intereſt into God's Cuſtody, and ſecured himſelf of another World; then he begins to live indeed, then he may laugh at the preſent World, deſpiſe temporal Life, and defie Death; foraſmuch as thenceforth he is out of the reach of Chance, Fate, or Fortune.

Philander *raviſh'd with the comforts of Religion.*

Phil. 'Tis true, *Biophilus*, 'tis true, as *Sebaſtian* ſaith, the World to come is the only Reality, and Religion the only Comfort. O happy we that know there is a God in the World, under whoſe Providence we live! and bleſſed be that Divine Goodneſs, which hath provided another World to receive us, and there promiſed us eternal Life.

O *Urania*, *Urania*, (Heaven I mean) thou end of Cares and Fears, and beginning of Joy without end! thou reſt of Souls, and only ſatisfaction of great and wiſe minds! I am raviſh'd with the thoughts of thee; I am ſo tranſported with hopes of thee, that I am become all Life and Spirit; methinks I begin to have wings, and could fly to Heaven.

Bioph. Sebaſtian ſpeaks ſhrewdly, I confeſs; but you, *Philander*, are too high a Flyer for me; you are ſo much in the Altitudes, that you muſt pardon me, if I, a little, ſuſpect that you have (according to your former cuſtom) been taking of a chearful Cup, which, as a wiſe Man obſerves, *makes Men ſpeak all things by Talents.*

1 Eſdr. 3. v. 21.

Phil. You are in the very right of it, *Biophilus*,

Biophilus, I have taken a Doſe, and a luſty one too (as *Sebaſtian* will be my Witneſs) ſo that I find my ſelf not a little elevated at this time. But, miſtake me not, it is not with drink; no (though I ſay it) I am grown a better Husband, and more frugal of my time, than to ſpend it on a Debauch: or (if you will) I am become a great Coward, and am afraid of an after reckoning.

Bioph. What reckoning, Man?

Phil. Nay, no other than that which *Sebaſtian* hath given us warning of, *the Judgment to come.* For I muſt tell you, I very much doubt whether God Almighty (who hath endowed us with noble Faculties, and thereby ſeems to have deſigned us for excellent purpoſes, and who hath alſo appointed our time to be but ſhort in this World) will take it well at our hands, that we ſhould drown the one, and drivel away the other in Senſuality.

The ſin and danger of Drunkenneſs, and that the pleaſures of it are falſe and deluſory.

Bioph. Now you grow ſerious, but what made you ſo brisk even now? In truth I ſuſpected you might have been bitten with your own Dog (as they ſay) and had prevented the Civility of my Houſe, by a liberal Glaſs at home.

Phil. O *Biophilus*, I thank God I am come to that paſs now, that I can dance without a Fiddle, and be merry without the aid of the Bottle; and I look upon thoſe Men to be in a very pitiable condition that cannot do ſo. For I have learned, by my former unhappy experience, that

that thoſe *liquid Conſolations* are mere cheats and palliative cures of Melancholy; and though perhaps a Man may by the help of them rid himſelf of the trouble of his own thoughts for the preſent (which is all that Wine can pretend to) yet he doth but reprieve himſelf for a time, and he will find himſelf again juſt where he was, as ſoon as he becomes ſober; for Conſcience is not to be totally drowned in Drink, nor the clamour thereof to be deaded by the noiſe of Huzza's.

Sebaſt. It is very true which *Philander* ſaith; for generally the Mirth of a Debauch, as it is ſtrained and artificial, ſo it cannot laſt long: it is at beſt but like the effects of an high Cordial, which may ſerve to rally the Spirits for ſome preſent encounter, but then they are ſpent in the conflict, and fall and flag again quickly after; or like thoſe mighty efforts which you ſhall obſerve ſome Perſons to make in a Convulſion, the reſult of which will be, that ſuch a Man ſhall become ſo much leſs than himſelf after the Fit, as he was more than himſelf whilſt it was upon him: for any Man ſhall find, that whenſoever the Spirits are extraordinarily exhilarated and dilated, they thereby become ſo thin and volatile, that they eaſily exhale and vaniſh, and ſo a Man becomes far more melancholy and lumpiſh after, than he was before.

But now in intellectual delights and entertainments, wherein a Man may be mer-

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ry and wiſe together, and ſo have no fear of an after-reckoning to pall the preſent Enjoyment, and eſpecially in ſuch Pleaſures as come in upon the Account of Religion, they afford a ſtill and ſedate delight, which refreſh the Heart more than dilate the Countenance, and gently raiſe and ſtrengthen the Spirits, but do not in any Meaſure exhauſt them.

Bioph. You Diſcourſe Ingeniouſly, *Sebaſtian*, but ſure you have not mended the Matter: for it is as good to be Drunk with Wine as with Conceitedneſs, which is the more laſting Diſtemper; and I pray let me ſee if you can excuſe this tranſport of *Philander* from fanaticiſm as well as from that which I at firſt ſuſpected, for ſure it muſt be one of them.

That religious Joy is not Fanatical, and the Nature of Fanaticiſm explained.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, do you think a Man cannot be Chearful unleſs he be either Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. It ſeems then in your Opinion, Fanaticiſm is Madneſs.

Sebaſt. Truly, Sir, I profeſs to you, I take it to be little better; eſpecially, if it be in any high Degree. For what (I pray you) is it to be Mad, but for a Man's Fancy or Paſſions ſo to get head of him, that he is hurried on wildly and extravagantly by ſuch an unaccountable *impetus*, as that his Reaſon (the common Principle of Mankind) is not able to reſtrain or govern him? and on the other ſide, what is it for a Man to fear without Danger, and to hope without Ground; to

believe without Reaſon, and to think, and ſpeak, or do ſuch Things, whereof he can give no Account which is intelligible by the reſt of Mankind? This I take to be Fanaticiſm, and this is as plainly a Diſeaſe and a Fit of the Body, as thoſe Convulſions which we ſpake of but now.

As for Example, If you ſhall obſerve a Man pretend to believe plain Impoſſibilities, and not only Supinely and Credulouſly ſwallow them, but confidently Avouch and Maintain them; it may be in regard of his Seriouſneſs and good Meaning, you will call him an Enthuſiaſt or Fanatick: Yet foraſmuch as you are ſatisfied, that the Things he is ſo Confident of, are Contradictions to the common Senſe and Experience of Mankind (notwithſtanding his Confidence and Devotion) you will conclude he is governed by other Principles than thoſe of a Man, and conſequently, that he is beſides himſelf, and under ſome degree of Madneſs.

Again, When you ſee a Man, who can make no Pretence to any Character of publick Authority, nor can give any ſufficient Proof of any ſpecial and extraordinary Commiſſion from God Almighty, ſhall notwithſtanding be acted by ſuch a heady and intemperate Zeal, as to ſuperſede the publick Magiſtrate, and take upon himſelf to Govern and Reform the World; this indeed is Fanaticiſm, but it cannot be acquitted of ſome Spice of Madneſs withal.

Or

Or laſtly (to come more home to you) When a Man ſhall be perplexed with endleſs Scruples, and Fears and Doubts of the Danger and Damnableneſs of ſuch Things as are manifeſtly the Violation of no Law, and ſhall be Dejected in his Conſcience, and ready to ſink into Deſperation; at ſuch Time as yet he is not Conſcious to himſelf, of either omitting any known Duty, or committing any wicked Thing: Or, on the other ſide, When ſuch a Man ſhall run into the other Extream, and be tranſported with Joy, and raviſh'd with Comfort; but upon no more intelligible Grounds, than he had before for his Fears and Dejections of Spirit. Both theſe Caſes may be very pitiable, but they are as well plain Symptoms of a craſie Mind, as they are Inſtances of Fanaticiſm. But——

Bioph. I am very glad to hear theſe Things from you, *Sebaſtian*, and that you have ſo ſlight an Opinion of that Sort of Men, who make ſuch a Figure, or rather ſuch a Duſt in the World.

Sebaſt. So far then we are agreed, but by your Favour, I believe all this which I have ſaid will make nothing towards the Proof of your Charge againſt *Philander*; for though I impute Unreaſonable and Extravagant Raptures to Fancy rather than to Faith, and account them rather a Diſtemper of the Body than the Devotion of the Mind; yet I muſt tell you after all, that True and Manly Religion is no cold and comfortleſs Thing, it is not a

lukewarm Notionality, not a formal and bayardly round of Duties, not a dull *temperamentum ad pondus*, as they call it, but is lively, vigorous and ſparkling, and hath its Joys and Raviſhments too; only they are more ſedate and governable, as well as more rational and accountable, than thoſe we ſpake of before; and ſo I ſuppoſe you will find it to be with *Philander*: He hath expreſs'd ſome heat, but not without light, and is both able to govern his Expreſſions, and to give you a ſober Reaſon of them.

Phil. Hearty Thanks, dear *Sebaſtian*, for vindicating me from the miſ-apprehenſions my innocent joy had expoſed me to with *Biophilus*; and herein you have not only done me a kindneſs, but obliged all good Men, and done a right to true Piety it ſelf, which is apt to be put out of Countenance with the Imputation of Fanaticiſm, and ſo far it ſuffers thereby, that a great many well-diſpoſed (but over baſhful and timorous) Men are tempted to a very ſtrange kind of Hypocriſie, and to pretend themſelves worſe than they are, and to trim it off in the indifferent ſtrain of the World, for fear of incurring the Cenſure of being Zealots and Bigots in Religion.

The true Grounds of Comfort in Religion.

But now I ſhall take heart, and adventure to let my Light ſhine out abroad, as well as burn within my Breaſt. And I cannot forbear upon this occaſion to return my moſt humble Thanks to God Almighty

mighty, who hath given me cauſe to hope in his Goodneſs, and the Cordial of that Hope, hath in ſome meaſure antidoted me againſt the Troubles and Vexations of this preſent World; for I profeſs to you, there is ſo much of Care and Fear, of Labour and Pain, of Sorrow and Diſquiet here below, what by croſs Accidents and Diſappointments, what by the Malice of evil Men, or by the Follies, Peeviſhneſs, and Jealouſies of weak and ſilly Men; that were it not for the Proſpect of a better State of Things above, and of Reſt and Peace, Stability and Satisfaction in another World, I ſhould be very far from being fond of this preſent Life. But now when I conſider and am ſatisfied, that at the worſt I am under a Providence, ſo that nothing befals by Chance, or by the mere Will of Man, but by Divine Appointment and Ordination; and conſequently there is nothing but what he both can and will make to work for Good in the Concluſion: And when withal I find my ſelf reſolved to ſubmit to his wiſe Purpoſes, by which means it is in my Power to be wiſer and better by all Occurrences; and in ſo doing, have my Hopes improved into ſome Meaſure of Aſſurance, that I ſhall in due time be tranſlated into thoſe happy Regions Above. This comforts my Heart under all the preſent Inconveniencies, and not only ſupports my Spirits, but chears them, and refreſhes my very countenance. And ſometimes it happens, that the more

the Vexations of the World had depreſs'd me, the higher do theſe Contemplations raiſe me; ſo that I break out into ſuch an holy triumph and bravery, as that which you (*Biophilus*) took Notice of in me ſince we came together.

Sebaſt. What think you now, *Biophilus*, is *Philander* Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. No, I acknowledge he ſpeaks like a Man, or an Angel rather (if there were any ſuch thing) but ſtill I ſuſpect there is ſome Trick or other in it; I cannot ſatisfie my ſelf in theſe religious Braveries, as he calls them.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, what is there to amuze you in this Matter? Conſider with your ſelf, how can it be otherwiſe, but that he who is throughly ſatisfied that it is neither blind Chance, nor ſurly Fate, nor ſome Ill-natur'd and Unluckly Being; but contrary-wiſe, a Great and Wiſe and Good God, that Governs the World: how can it be (I ſay) but that ſuch a Man muſt needs be very Comfortable under ſuch a Protection?

Or how can it come to paſs that a Man that lives Virtuouſly and Piouſly, who approves himſelf to his own Reaſon and Conſcience, and, as near as he can, to the Mind of that Great God, who Made, and Governs the World, ſhould be Tormented with pannick Fears of he knows not what; ſince, whether he looks upward or downward, into himſelf or abroad, there is Nothing can hurt him;

Nothing

nothing but what muſt needs chear him with an hopefull expectation of a good iſſue of ſuch a courſe in the upſhot of things; eſpecially if withall he have a firm belief of Eternal Life in another World, and of unſpeakable joy and felicity there attainable, and certainly to be enjoyed by him that purſues it in his life by ſuch a courſe of Vertue and Piety as aforeſaid. How can you imagine that ſuch a man ſhould be down in the mouth (as we ſay) or dull and out of Humour? Nay, rather, how is it poſſible he ſhould be able to ſmother ſuch hopes, and conceal ſuch joys? no, they are too great to be kept ſecret in his boſom; they will break out now and then in triumphant expreſſions.

The admirablle and unſpeakable conſolation of believing Eternal Life.

Eternity, *Biophilus*, eternal Life, (I mean) is ſo great, ſo glorious, ſo admirable an happineſs, that I can never be perſwaded that man really believes it, and hath any good meaſure of hopes that he ſhall attain it, who can be ſo reſerved and Stoical, as to keep his countenance whenever he thinks of it.

Do but judge with your ſelf, if you could have ground to believe you ſhould never forgo this preſent life, but for ever enjoy your Houſe, your Wife and Children, nor ever be parted from thoſe wiſe and good Friends you have made choice of; that no Accident, no Diſeaſe, nor Malice of Men or evil Spirits could reach you; but you might

purſue your Deſigns, and meet with nothing to Interrupt the Train of your Thoughts and Projections, ſo that you could know Death only in Speculation; in this Caſe you may eaſily imagine, how much at eaſe a Man's Thoughts would be, how ſecure his Mind, how bold his Spirit, and how chearful his Countenance. But now to live for ever in the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be not only ſecure from all Pain or Care, Fear or Danger, but to be in the Poſſeſſion of Perfect and Conſummate Bliſs, to enjoy the Favour of God, the Preſence of the ever-bleſſed *Jeſus*, and the perpetual Society of all Good Men made perfect, and free from their Ignorances, Errors, Paſſions and Infirmities. This is a State of Life that I proteſt I cannot think of without Aſtoniſhment, nor ſpeak of without a Paſſion, nor hope for without a Rapture.

Bioph. I ſhould eaſily conſent to you in all this, *Sebaſtian*, if I thought it was real; for I am neither ſo fond of a Grave, as not to be deſirous to live as long as it is poſſible, nor ſo ſevere to my ſelf, as to be willing to want any of thoſe Comforts of Life and Supports in Death that are attainable; but, in truth, I ſuſpect all theſe great Things, *Philander*, that you talk of to be but pleaſant Dreams, and the high rants of Fancy.

Sebaſt. But why ſhould you think ſo, *Biophilus*, ſeeing it is very plain, that the ſobereſt and beſt Men are of this Perſwaſion;

ſion; and for the moſt part, the better the Men are, the more lively is their ſenſe of theſe Things. Can you imagine that either God Almighty ſhould put a Cheat upon the very Beſt of Mankind (and upon them eſpecially?) or can you think, that the Beſt of Men ſhould be the greateſt Lyars, and pretend to that of which they had no real Grounds? I pray therefore be free with me, and tell me the Cauſes of your Miſtruſt in this Caſe.

Bioph. I think I have Reaſon to doubt theſe high Pretences to the wonderful Comforts of Religion, in the firſt place; becauſe I obſerve the State of Mankind to be generally very uneaſie, and the World to be full of nothing more than Melancholy and Complaint, which ſure could not be, if there were ſuch effectual Remedies ready at Hand, and ſuch an Hearts Eaſe in Religion.

Sebaſt. I will anſwer you in that preſently, but I pray firſt tell me (by the way) what do you think is the reaſon that there are ſo many ſickly and valetudinary People in the World?

Bioph. Truly I think we may reſolve the greateſt part of thoſe long and tedious Diſtempers, under which ſo many People languiſh, into Surfeits and other Inſtances of their own Riot and Luxury.

Sebaſt. Very well, but you do not yet reach my meaning; I ask you therefore again, Do you not think that there are a great many amongſt thoſe that pine away

away under the aforesaid lingring distempers, who might possibly receive help and ease, if they took due care of themselves?

Bioph. Yes doubtless, for in those chronical Diseases there is time for Advice and Application, and fit intermissions for Medicines to take place in; but the mischief is, some Men are humoursom and obstinate, and will take no Advice whatever comes of it: others deliver themselves up to Empiricks and unskilful Persons, who often make the Disease worse than it was; and then there are some so soft and delicate, that although they have good Advice given them, and might be cured, yet will not follow the Rules that are prescribed to them.

Seb. Very good, now you have saved me the labour, and have answered your own Objection against the real comfortableness of Religion: For there are the same three accounts to be assigned of the uncomfortableness of Mens Spirits, which you have given of the sickly Estate of their Bodies, *viz.*

The Causes of the Uncomfortableness of Mens Spirits generally.

In the first place there are some Men who fansie themselves either too Wise to be advised, or think the Case of Humane Nature too desperate to be cured; and therefore grow Morose and Sceptical, and will rather cloak themselves up in a musty melancholy Reservedness for the present, and run the venture of all for the future, than give themselves the trouble of any serious thoughts

thoughts of Religion. Now you cannot expect that these Men should find the Comfort of Religion, who were so far from making Experiment of it, that they were afraid of it, like those Wise Men that for fear they should one Time or other be poisoned, will therefore never eat any Meat.

Bioph. If you would pardon my Interrupting of you, I could tell you for all this, that there are some certain Men in the World (though not many I confess) who enjoy themselves very well, and yet never were in Debt to any Religion for it.

Sebast. Very likely, *Biophilus*, for so as I remember, King *John* killed a very fat Stag that had never heard Mass in its Life; and so you shall see an Oxe in the Stall, let him but have Meat and Drink and ease enough, he never repines at the approach of the Day of Slaughter: In like manner there are a sort of dull unthinking Men, that pass away their Time in a pleasant Dream of Sensuality, and never feel any want of the Consolations of Religion; but it is not because there is no need of them, but because such Persons do not feel the need, nor indeed are sensible of any Thing else that is Manly and Generous.

How it comes to pass that some Men seem to live chearfully without God and Religion.

If I should tell you it was dangerous being upon such a precipice, I suppose you would not think it a Confutation of my Caution to tell me, that notwithstanding a certain blind Man slept and snored securely

curely upon it; for real Danger is Danger whether Men be apprehenſive of it or no: or if you ſhould obſerve a poor Man to dream of Plenty, and all the Affluence of the World, you will not count him to be as happy as he that really enjoys thoſe Things; a Dream is one Thing, and real Felicity is another: and though the former fanſies himſelf for the preſent as Happy as the other, yet I am ſure you, who know one is aſleep and the other awake, do not think it to be ſo. Thus it is in Religion.

Bioph. Your pardon again, it is not only true that ſome ſtupid and incapable Perſons are at hearts eaſe without Religion, but you ſhall obſerve ſome of a better mold; polite and ingenious Men live very pleaſantly, and yet are not beholden to Religion for it.

Sebaſt. It may be ſo; but then I doubt they muſt be beholden to the Bottle for it, which they muſt ply continually too to keep them from thinking: for I have ſhewed you already, that it is as impoſſible for a thinking Man (out of a Debauch, and who cannot but be ſenſible that he muſt die) to be Comfortable without the Aids of ſome Religion or other; as it is for you or me to Caper and Frolick upon the brink of ſuch a Precipice as we ſpoke of but now: In ſhort, ſuch Men as have Eyes in their Heads have no other Refuge, but to wink hard, that they may not be ſenſible of their Danger.

And ſo much for that. Now if you pleaſe I will

I will proceed: In the ſecond Place then there is (as you well obſerved) another ſort of Men, who, though they are not ſo refractary and contumacious as to defy the whole Art of Phyſick (as a perfect Cheat) yet, out of Stingineſs, or ſome other Folly, will apply themſelves only to Quacks and Mountebanks, who, inſtead of curing their preſent Infirmities, by unskilful Management, render them more dangerous and intolerable. So it is in this Caſe of Religion and the Minds of Men, there are thoſe who do not abandon themſelves to deſperate Atheiſm, nor ſceptically caſt off all Care of Religion; but finding they cannot be at eaſe without ſome Regard of God, and Proviſion for another World; yet (not falling into the Hands of thoſe that were able to Principle them right) entertain ſuch imperfect and inconſiſtent Notions of Religion, as can really afford them no ſolid Conſolation. And this is a ſecond Cauſe why the World is ſo uncomfortable, notwithſtanding all the relief that Religion pretends to give.

False Notions of God and Religion very uncomfortable.

As for Example Suppoſe a Man believes there is a God, yet if he look upon him under the Notion of a cruel and unrelenting Tyrant, governed by mere will, and who aims at Nothing but the ſecuring and greatning his own power, and conſequently is ſo far unconcerned for any of his Creatures, that it is all one to him whether they be ſaved or damned eternally;

nally; you will eaſily grant me that the Belief of ſuch a God cannot be very comfortable, ſince a Man cannot think of him, nor much leſs exerciſe any act of Devotion towards him without Horror and Affrightment.

Or, again, Suppoſe a Man ſhould entertain a leſs horrid Notion of God, as that though he be not ſuch a Monſter as the former render'd him: yet that he is a nice and captious Deity, very techy and hard to pleaſe, that would make no candid and equitable Interpretation, nor allow of Sincerity and good Meaning, but muſt have his Mind to a Tittle, and every Thing muſt be done preciſely according to Rule; and conſequently, muſt needs be able to find frequent occaſions againſt his Creatures, and was likely as often to animadvert ſeverely upon them. This muſt needs be a very uncomfortable Principle of Religion, as well as the former, ſince ſuch a God is only the Object of Fear, and not of Love, and *all Fear hath Torment.*

1 Jo. 4. 18.

Moreover, put caſe a Man ſhould have a more kindly and benign Notion of God, than either of the former, but yet finds himſelf perfectly at a loſs how to pleaſe the Divine Majeſty, and propitiate him towards himſelf; in regard he knows of no Declaration of his Mind and Will, that he hath made (becauſe he either never heard of, or doth not believe the Holy Scriptures) it is impoſſible but that a devout

devout Mind in this Caſe muſt be very much perplexed and uneaſie; and the more Devout the Man is, the more will his Perplexity be, in regard that when he hath done all he can to pleaſe God, he cannot reſt ſatisfied whether he hath ſerved or diſſerved him all the while. Which in a great Meaſure was the Condition of the Gentile World, for lack of Divine Revelation; and therefore they were neceſſitated in their Devotions to make uſe of abundance of Various Rites, in hopes, that if one ſort of them miſſed, the other might hitt to be acceptable to the Deity. And when all was done, they were not ſure that either, or any of them was perfectly agreeable to his Mind: And therefore as their Devotion muſt needs be Superſtitious in the Nature of it; ſo conſequently it muſt be attended with pannick Fears, and uncomfortable Apprehenſions, as the Fruit of it.

Furthermore, Let us ſuppoſe a Man of ſo high an Attainment in Religion, as that he had ſome Intimations of the Divine Will, as to Matter of Fact, but yet was under a Diſpenſation of Religion, which (at leaſt in the letter of it) conſiſted mainly of ſundry nice and curious Obſervances; ſuch as the abſtaining from ſuch or ſuch Meats; the performing ſuch or ſuch Rites and Ceremonies; of none of which he could give himſelf any rational Account, or be conſcious of any other

other Obligation to them, but only, this is commanded, and thus it muſt be (which was the Caſe of the Superſtitious *Jews*, as it is alſo of a ſort of degenerate and Judaizing Chriſtians) now it is plain that this State of Religion muſt needs be very uncomfortable alſo; becauſe a Man muſt of neceſſity drag on very heavily, where his Reaſon doth not go before him, and his Judgment is not convinced of the Goodneſs and Excellency of thoſe Obſervances, as well as of the Neceſſity of them.

Laſtly, If a Man was under a Religion which could give him no aſſurance of any reward of his Devotion; but that for ought he knew he might at laſt have only his Labour for his Pain: Foraſmuch as there was no way to aſſure him whether it ſhould be his portion to rot for ever in the Grave, or whether after Death he ſhould be transformed into ſome other Creature; or that though the Name and Memory of his good Actions ſhould remain, yet his particular Perſon was to be ſwallowed up into the Womb of general Nature, and he for ever loſt (ſuch as which were the utmoſt hopes of the generality of the Blind Pagans.)

Now, I ſay, ſuch Principles of Religion as this, or any of the aforementioned, muſt needs be very uncomfortable; but all theſe, *Biophilus*, are as manifeſtly falſe, as they are ſadly melancholy; and therefore it is not any defect in Religion that the

the Spirits of Men are uncomfortable, but the default of thoſe bad notions they have taken up, inſtead of the true Principles of Religion. And ſo much for that ſecond ſort of Men.

Bioph. I am wonderfully pleaſed with this laſt Diſcourſe of yours, in which you have not more demonſtrated the uncomfortableneſs, than expoſed the nonſenſe and abſurdity of a great number of Religioniſts; and therefore ſo far I thank you. But then again, I muſt tell you, upon due conſideration, it makes as much againſt your ſelf as any of them, ſo far as concerns the point in hand between us. For after all that can be ſaid, it is undeniable, that ſome Men of very different perſwaſions, are as chearful in their ſeveral and reſpective ways, one as the other: now foraſmuch as theſe cannot all be true, in regard they contradict each other; doth it not therefore follow from hence, that the comfortableneſs of Mens Spirits doth not depend merely upon Religion, but upon ſomething elſe?

Sebaſt. In truth you follow me very cloſe, yet I have two or three things to ſay, which I do not doubt will acquit me in what I have ſaid, and I hope may ſatisfie you. Firſt, It is to be conſidered, that a Man may be found in his Principles of Religion, and right for the main, who yet may differ from other Men, and perhaps from the truth too, ſo much as to make him be reputed of a different Reli-

The cauſes of the comfortableneſs of ſome miſtaken Religions.

gion; yet notwithſtanding thoſe great Principles which he is found in, and that honeſt zeal he ſhews in the Proſecution of them, will procure him acceptance with God, and inable him to live very comfortably: for fervent Devotion will cover a multitude of Errors, as well *as charity doth a multitude of ſins.* And this is to be hoped is the Condition of a great many well-meaning, but deluded People.

Again, Secondly, it is obſervable in this caſe, that many warm themſelves *by ſparks of their own kindling*, and are heated more by their own Motion, than by the Grounds and Cauſes of it: Zeal naturally warms the Blood, and whatſoever warms, in ſome meaſure comforts too; inſomuch that ſome Men of very raſcally Opinions, and ſuch as in the conſequences of them, tend towards Hell, are yet raiſed up towards Heaven by the power of an active and heated Phancy.

But after all, you muſt remember (what I ſaid before) that Truth is Truth, and Dream is Dream; my meaning is, the Man of a mighty Zeal in his way, may ſeem to himſelf happy (whatever his Principles be) but it is only the Man of ſound Principles of Religion, that can be truly and underſtandingly and conſtantly comfortable.

And now I ſuppoſe I may come to the Third and laſt ſort of Men, which diſparage Religion (juſt as an unruly Patient diſcre-

diſcredits his Phyſician) namely, thoſe who, though they have right notions of Religion, yet live careleſly, and are by no means anſwerable to their Principles in the conduct of their Lives.

A wicked life cannot be comfortable, if a Man's Religion be never ſo good.

Now it can be no wonder, nor any ſlander to Religion, that ſuch Men who live wickedly ſhould be uncomfortable in their Spirits. For we may as well expect this cold Weather to warm our ſelves by a Glow-worm, or a painted-Fire, as that any Man's Heart ſhould be truly chearful by the advantage of a Religion which conſiſted only in Notion, and was not vigorouſly practiſed: nay, it would be a wonder indeed if ſuch a Man ſhould not be ſadly melancholy, lying continually under the laſhes of his own Conſcience, for contradicting the very Principles of his own Mind. And this is ſo far from reflecting any diſhonour upon Religion, that it is a mighty Vindication of the truth and power of it, when a Man's own Heart ſhall revenge upon him his contempt of her Dictates and Sentiments; and certainly the better and more generous a Man's Principles are (which he in this manner violates by a lewd Life) ſo much more ſharp will be the ſtings of Conſcience, and the uneaſineſs of his Condition.

But now, take a Man who to right Principles in his mind joins a comformable Holy Life, and (as there is all the reaſon in the World for it, ſo) it is a thouſand

to one in experience, but he lives comfortably. And thus I think I have fully acquitted my ſelf of your prime Objection againſt the comfortableneſs of Religion.

Bioph. I confeſs, *Sebaſtian*, you have ſpoke a great deal of Reaſon, but yet perhaps you are not ſo clearly come off as you may imagine: for I have ſtill to object, that many Men of your Principles, and who (as it ſeems) in conſequence of them, carry it ſometimes with full ſail of joy and courage, yet at other times are not able to maintain this tide, but flag, and are as much down by fits as other Men; nay, do you not obſerve that there are Men in the World, whoſe Principles I know you will allow, and withal whoſe lives you cannot blame, and yet theſe very Men ſhall be remarkably uncomfortable, and no Men fuller of Complaints and more uneaſie than they. Therefore it ſeems Religion is neither ſuch a ſtable Principle of Comfort, nor ſuch a *Panacea*, ſuch a general remedy of the Troubles of Humane Life, as is pretended: if you can reconcile this with your former aſſertions, I think I ſhall then be forced to yield you the Cauſe.

How it may happen that pious Men may be uncomfortable.

Sebaſt. It is true which you obſerve, That ſometimes thoſe that ſeem to have all the advantages of Religion, are notwithſtanding uncomfortable under them, and yet this may be no impeachment either of the truth, or of the efficacy of thoſe Principles. For this which you

ſpeak

ſpeak of may come to paſs upon ſeveral other accounts; as, namely,

In the firſt place, it may be that he, in whoſe whole courſe of life we can obſerve no blemiſh, may notwithſtanding be juſtly charged by his own Conſcience for ſeveral ſuch miſcarriages as may well make him uneaſie till he hath made his Peace with God and himſelf again, by hearty Repentance and Reformation. Now you muſt not impute this to the defect of Conſolation in the Principles of Religion, but to the man's own defect of Piety. For whenſoever we ſee a Man troubled for violating the Rules of his Religion, we have a kind of ſenſible experiment of the great reality and mighty power of it; and this may happen, though you ſee not the cauſes of it.

Again, It may be the Perſon who now lives very vertuouſly, and conſequently might live comfortably upon the Principles of Religion, hath formerly been a great ſinner: and now, though his Repentance hath made his Peace with God, and ſo there is nothing juſtly to interrupt his Comfort; yet as often as he reflects upon the hainouſneſs of his former miſcarriages, no wonder if the briskneſs of his Spirit be abated, if it be but by the Conſideration of the Danger he hath eſcaped.

Again, It may happen that he who is not indeed conſcious to himſelf of any guilt which ſhould deject his confidence

towards God; yet by the malicious artifice of the great Enemy of Mankind, may have ſuch black and frightful fancies raiſed in his Head, as may very much diſcompoſe him for the preſent, till by Prayer and Application to the Grace of God he overcomes them.

Moreover ſometimes, when all is well within, and a Man's own Heart doth not accuſe him, yet it may happen that outward afflictions may be ſo vexatious, ſo ſharp and pinching to him, that for a time even a good Man's Spirits may be diſordered by them, till he recollect himſelf, *and*, Sampſon *like*, *ſhake off thoſe Philiſtims that are upon him*; I mean until he rally the forces of his Reaſon, or rather till by Faith he take Sanctuary, in the impregnable Fortreſs of Conſcience and Religion, and there he ſecurely weathers out the ſtorm, and all becomes quickly ſerene and calm again.

But after all that is or can be ſaid, allowance muſt ſtill be made for an unhappy temper of Body: for it muſt be remembred that Religion is a Medicine for the Soul or Mind, and not for Bodily Diſeaſes. You know the intimate correſpondence and quick ſympathy between thoſe two Inmates, Soul and Body, which is ſuch, that like *Hippocrates*'s Twins, they mutually affect one another, ſo that one of them cannot well enjoy it ſelf, if the other be in diſorder. Do but conſider how exceeding difficult it is to maintain

tain the rate of a Mans common Converſation, and eſpecially to bear up to any meaſure of brisk airyneſs, when the Body is but a little ſickly and diſcompoſed. And then how can you imagine but that there will be an unevenneſs of temper in a melancholy Man's deportment, notwithſtanding that the comforts of Religion ſhould be as ſolid and ſtable as I have repreſented them to be?

Bioph. But by your leave, Sir, I underſtood you that there was ſuch a Catholick and Paramount Antidote of all ſorrow to be found in Religion, that your pious Man could never have been ſad any more (like the Chimæra of a wiſe Man amongſt the Stoicks) neither outward Accidents could diſcompoſe him, nor Bodily Infirmities interrupt his tranquility and ſelf enjoyments.

Sebaſt. Sure, *Biophilus*, you did not think I took every good Man to become a God Almighty, or the powers of Religion to be ſo omnipotent, as that becauſe they can recreate a Man's Spirits, they ſhould therefore alſo make him intirely another Creature. You might as well imagine I aſſerted that this ſpiritual Remedy ſhould preſerve Men from dying, as from being ſick or melancholy, when their Conſtitution is prone to it. For although by reaſon of the near Relation between Soul and Body (as I ſaid before) it is not to be doubted, but that the comforts of the Mind upon account

The unhappy influence of a melancholy Body upon the Mind.

of Religion, may, in a good meaſure, chear the bodily Spirits, yet, on the other ſide, it is to be expected that the Body will have its influence reciprocally; and when it is infirm, will depreſs and clog the Mind that it ſhall be ſure to be ſenſible of the burthen, and be able to move the leſs briskly in its courſe. In ſhort, the buſineſs between the Soul and Body ſtands thus; namely, as, on the one hand, the Body can affect the Mind ſo far as to retard its motion, and check its flight; but not ſo as altogether to oppoſe and hinder them: ſo, on the other hand, the Mind (if that be comfortable) comforts and refreſhes the bodily Spirits, but is not able entirely to alter them: For Temper will be Temper, and Melancholy will be Melancholy ſtill.

That therefore which I aſſert and have hitherto endeavoured to prove, and that which the common experience of Pious Men atteſts, is no more but this, That there are never failing Springs of Conſolation in Religion, provided the iſſues of them be not obſtructed by ſome or other of the aforeſaid occaſions.

Phil. I know, *Sebaſtian*, you have well conſidered all that which you have ſaid, and I thank God I have ſome experience of the truth of it for the moſt part; and therefore have reaſon to rely upon your judgment for the reſt. But yet there is one thing runs in my thoughts, concerning which I would gladly ask your opinion,

on, if I do not unſeaſonably interrupt your diſcourſe with *Biophilus*.

Sebaſt. You will not interrupt me, *Philander*, for I was at a full period; or if it was otherwiſe, we would make a Parentheſis for your ſatisfaction: What is it therefore wherein I can ſerve you?

Phil. The matter, in ſhort then, is this: I have obſerved ſeveral Divines, amongſt the cauſes of perplexity and uncomfortableneſs of Good Men, to reckon one, of which you have hitherto taken no notice; namely, *the caſe of Deſertion*, which they define to be, "When God withdraws "himſelf arbitrarily from ſuch Perſons for "a time, and hides his Face from them "upon the ſole account of his Preroga- "tive, or for ſome reaſon beſt known to "himſelf, but without the leaſt guilt or "provocation on their parts. Now if this be true, it may then not only happen that the very beſt, and alſo the moſt ſanguine and chearful Men naturally, may be very uncomfortable; but the very ſtate of Spiritual comfort will be very uncertain and fluctuating: and, which is worſt of all, there will be a Diſeaſe without a Remedy, a Caſe that admits of no Conſolation. For what can all Counſels and Diſcourſes, or all the Exerciſes of Faith or Reaſon avail againſt a Peremptory Act of God?

The unreaſonableneſs of a commonly received opinion concerning God's deſerting of good Men.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Philander*, as you obſerve, there hath been ſuch a Notion broached, and the effects and conſequences have been bad enough; For beſides

The abſurd conſequences of that Opinion.

ſides what you have well alledged, under the pretence hereof, ſome have been ſo abuſed as to indulge their own humour, and, as *Jona.* ſaid, *he did well to be angry*, ſo they fanſie, they ought to be melancholy, when God (as they imagine) ſets himſelf againſt them, and they thereby are tempted to think hardly of the Divine Majeſty, as if he was a great Tyrant who took pleaſure in the complaints of his Creatures; and which is worſe than that (if worſe can be) ſometimes evil Men get this Notion by the end, and then whenſoever their wicked lives render their Conſciences uneaſie to them, they preſently conceit it may be only the withdrawing of the Divine Favour from them, and how can they help it, ſince it is the Caſe of good Men to be ſo dealt with?

The groundleſſneſs of the aforeſaid Opinion.

But what ground there is for all this I cannot imagine. It is true, we ought not to diſpute the Divine Prerogative, or what he may do if he pleaſes. For we find it dangerous to take upon us to limit the Prerogative of Earthly Princes; and if they may have reaſons for ſuch things as we do not underſtand, much more hath God, whoſe wiſdom is infinite and unſearchable: therefore not to define what God may or may not do, it is plain that there is no foundation in Holy Scripture (which is the Declaration of his Will) to think he will take ſuch a courſe as this caſe ſuppoſes; and beſides, it ſeems inconſiſtent

conſiſtent with his ſincery and goodneſs, and can by no means be reconciled with that ſettled and immovable delight he declares himſelf to take in good Men, that he ſhould play faſt and looſe with them, or (as ſome have rudely expreſs'd it) play at bo-peep with his Children.

No, *Philander*, aſſure your ſelf, infinite Goodneſs will not diſguiſe it ſelf, and put on a frightful Vizard merely to ſcare his weak and timorous Children; ſo far from it, that contrariwiſe, ſo long as Men continue Conſtant, Loyal and Dutiful towards him, he will be unchangeable in his favour, and conſtantly ſhine out upon them in the bright beams of love and kindneſs. And if it ſhall happen that (as I granted to *Biophilus*) the melancholy of Men's Conſtitution ſhall riſe up in ſuch black fumes, as not only to cloud their Minds, but that (conſequently thereof) they may entertain diſmal Apprehenſions of him; yet againſt all this he is ready to relieve them by his Providence, and to aſſiſt and comfort them by his Holy Spirit, if he be devoutly applied to: but to be ſure he will never exaſperate the condition of a ſincerely good Man by any unprovoked act of his own. He hath told us, *He will not break a bruiſed reed, nor quench ſmoaking flax.* And that, *if men draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to them*; and he neither needs it, nor is inclined to try experiments upon poor melancholy Men. Let us have a care there-

Matt. 12. 20. James 4. 8.

therefore of charging the effects of our own changeable humour (either of Body or Mind) upon the unchangeable God. For ſo long as we walk by the Light of his Word, we may live under the Light of his Countenance, if (at leaſt) our own Melancholy interpoſe not, and eclipſe it to us: and (bateing outward troubles) we may, upon thoſe terms, in a good meaſure enjoy Heaven upon Earth; we may be as bold as Lions, as chearful as Angels; in a word, as full of joy as our Hearts can hold: For the Principles of Religion will beat all this out, and God will never interrupt the efficacy of them.

An Holy Triumph in Contemplation of the comfort of true Religion.

Phil. Oh Bleſſed! For ever bleſſed be the Divine Goodneſs, and God's Bleſſing on your Heart, *Sebaſtian*, for the good report and aſſurance you have given us of it. And now, Friends, why ſhould we not be very good, that we may be thus comfortable? and why ſhould we not be comfortable if we be good? Why ſhould the Jolly Fellows out-do us, whoſe Hearts are filled with Froth, and their Heads with Steam, and we that (if we be as we pretend to be) have God, and Conſcience, and Heaven on our ſides, hang down our Heads and Hands, and by ſo doing reproach our God, our Religion, and our ſelves too?

Have not we ſuch Notions of a God, as render him a juſt and a *faithful Creator*, a wiſe and benign Being, that is tender of,

and

and exorable towards his Creatures: How then can we chuſe but love him, and delight in him?

Hath not his Divine Majeſty made his mind ſo well known to us, that we cannot be to ſeek what will pleaſe him, but may go on chearfully in the courſe of our Duty without Diſtruſt or Scruple? And can we doubt his conſtancy to himſelf, and to that Declaration he hath made of his Will, that we ſhould ſuſpect the end, if we uſe the means; ſince we may read our own deſtiny before hand, and anticipate the Sentence of the Great Day of Judgment? Are not all his Laws ſo juſt and rational, that they agree with the very ſenſe of our own Mind, ſo that *his Service is perfect Freedom*? Foraſmuch as in a very proper ſenſe we are governed by our own Laws, thoſe of the Goſpel being enacted in our own Conſciences.

And are we not ſatisfied that we ſhall be ſo far from loſing our labour in Religion, that we have the fulleſt aſſurance (ſuch a thing is capable of) that in reward of faithful ſerving God in this Life, we ſhall after Death be raiſed up again, and live for ever and ever with him in his Kingdom of Heaven? Surely all this together is ſufficient to make us fervent and hearty in the exerciſe of Religion, and comfortable in our Spirits when we have ſo done.

Sebaſt. Bravely reſolved, *Philander*, this pace (if you hold it) will bring you to

Urania

Urania preſently. But I will bear you company if I can; and therefore I add to what you have ſaid, why ſhould we be afraid to be alone, or in the dark, ſince we believe God is every where, and in the greateſt ſolitude will afford us the comfortable effects of his Preſence and Providence? or why ſhould we be under dreadful apprehenſions of the power and malicious enterpriſes of evil Spirits upon us, ſeeing we are convinced *that greater is he that is with us, than he that is in the World?*

Why ſhould we be dejected at worldly loſſes, or miſcarriages in our temporal affairs, when we know that *in Heaven we have a more enduring Subſtance?*

Why ſhould we be diſmay'd at the infliction of any Pain or torture upon our Bodies, either by the Hand of God in a violent diſeaſe, or by the cruelty of Men that hate and perſecute us: ſince God hath promiſed *that no temptation ſhall overtake us, but what we ſhall be able to bear*? that is, he both can, and will either abate the torments, or ſupport us under them.

In a word, What need we be afraid of death it ſelf, ſince *it cannot kill the Soul*, and is no more but only a dark paſſage to a Kingdom of light and glory——

Bioph. You talk bravely, Gentlemen, but I proteſt I am amazed at you: for to this very day I never look'd upon Religion as any other than an auſtere and melancholy courſe of life, and the moſt undeſirable

ſirable thing in the whole World.

Phil. For God's ſake then, *Biophilus*, what is comfortable, if Religion be melancholy? Is the World ſo very comfortable, when you know it is full of nothing but care and folly, vexation and diſappointment? Is Sin ſo comfortable, which (after the Commiſſion of it) perpetually doggs a Man with guilt, and ordinarily blemiſhes his Credit, diſorders his Fortunes, impairs his Health, and cows and debaſes his Spirit? Or is Death ſo comfortable a thing, which repreſents to a Man nothing but an horrible pit of Darkneſs, and the Land of Oblivion.

If Religion be not comfortable, nothing is, and Mankind is a ſad and deplorable Creature.

What (I ſay) then can be comfortable, if that be not ſo, which is the only remedy againſt all the former? for it is plain, that nothing but the hopes of another and better World at laſt can enable a Man to enjoy himſelf tolerably in this preſent: Nothing but living vertuouſly for the time to come, can repair the miſchief of ſins formerly committed: and nothing but Eternal Life is a ſufficient antidote againſt the fears of Death: and all theſe are the effects and benefits of Religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, Mankind muſt needs be the moſt deplorably unhappy kind of Being in the whole World. For though other Creatures are in ſome ſort fellow-ſufferers in the common Calamity of this World; yet beſides that their ſhare is ordinarily not ſo great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing, for

for the future, but only feel the preſent evil, and they have no reſtraint upon them from what they deſire, nor no remorſe for what they have done; therefore if Mankind have not the glory of his Conſcience when he doth well, to ſet againſt the checks and girds of it when he doth amiſs; and if he have not hopes to counter-balance his fears, and a reward hereafter for his ſelf-denial at preſent, his condition is far the worſt of any Creature in the World. Therefore, as I ſaid, Religion is his peculiar concern, and ſingular advantage, as that which only can repair all his misfortunes.

Sebaſt. But I pray, *Biophilus*, what do you apprehend in Religion that can make it look ſo melancholy to you? *Is it becauſe* it ſets a God before you, than which nothing can be more deſirable? for *God is love*, is *rich in goodneſs*, nay goodneſs it ſelf; inſomuch, that if it were poſſible any thing in the Univerſe ſhould be more good than he, that would be God: He made Man, preſerves him, loves him, delights in him, deſigns him to live eternally with himſelf. In a word, all imaginable comfort is ſo wrapp'd up in this one word, *God*, that I remember a brave Heathen ſaid, *He would not be willing to live a day in the World, if he thought there was not a God in it.*

M. Antoninus.

It may be, you will ſay, this God is Juſt and Holy, and jealous of his Honour, and will revenge himſelf upon ſtubborn

born and incorrigible Sinners; all this is true, but what need you be one of those that provoke him; and then, the juster and holier he is, the better and more comfortable it is for you; or if you have offended him heretofore, yet if you repent and turn to him, he is so exorable and pitiful, that no tender Parent hath more yerning Bowels, or more open Arms, to receive his Prodigal and lost Son returning home to him, than God hath towards penitent Sinners.

The great truths of Religion vindicated from the Imputation of uncomfortableness.

Will you object the self-denials required by Religion, as that a Man must restrain himself for God's sake of many things that are pleasant to Flesh and Blood? It is true there are such things required, but they are not so many as that a Man may not live very pleasantly notwithstanding; and if they were more than they are, who would not comply with them to obtain the favour of such a God, and to gain Eternal Life upon those terms?

I am sure you cannot object against the direct and positive duties of Religion, such as Prayers and Praises to God, reading and meditating on his Word, or Acts of Beneficence and Charity towards Mankind; for there is nothing more pleasant and entertaining, nothing more delicious than these, if they be rightly understood. So that in short, it is no better than a mere slander to call Religion uncomfortable, and such as could proceed from nothing but the Devil himself; or

if from Men, it muſt be ſuch as had never tried it, nor were reſolved ever to do ſo.

Bioph. You muſt pardon me, Gentlemen, I tell you plainly I never felt any of theſe Comforts of Religion which you ſpeak of.

Phil. I, there's the buſineſs, now you have ſaid all, here lies the bottom of all the ſcandalous reports of Religion, as if it was a ſowre melancholy thing. Try it, *Biophilus*, and you will quickly confute your ſelf, experience will do it for you; you uſed to ſay, Seeing is believing; now, in God's Name, make experiment, *Taſte and ſee how good the Lord is*; and let me tell you this for your incouragement, there were never yet any who effectually made the experiment and were diſappointed. A great many who ſlighted Religion for a great while, at laſt have become ſenſible of their folly, and made their refuge in it; but it is very rare, and next to impoſſible, to find any who in earneſt applied themſelves to it, that ever apoſtatized from it, or pretended they were diſappointed of Comfort in it.

Bioph. But, for God's ſake, what do you mean by trying? What would you have me do? I ſhould be very glad to live comfortably.

The true method of experi-

Phil. By trying, we mean no more but this: You muſt apply your ſelf in earneſt to the knowledge and practice of Religion,

Religion, the very firſt ſtep to which is gravity and ſerioufneſs of Spirit. It was, I remember, the ſhort and weighty Counſel of the Great *Hugo Grotius*, when he lay on his Death Bed, to ſome about him, who asked his advice, *Be ſerious*, ſaid he, and your work is half done: leave off tricks of wit and captious Evaſions; do not pleaſe your ſelf in a trifling pretence to extraordinary ſagacity in finding flaws in ſo weighty a concern as this we ſpeak of; but be willing to believe, and then (as I ſaid) reſolve to live up to the convictions of your Conſcience, and you will, in due time, find the comfort of ſo doing. *menting the comforts of Religion.*

You do not expect to feel the warmth of the Fire, this cold Seaſon, unleſs you draw near to it, and continue by it; no more reaſonably can you expect to feel the Comforts of Religion, till you have imbraced the Doctrines, and at leaſt begun to live by the laws of it: but when you have ſo done, from thenceforth you will begin to be ſenſible of what we have diſcourſed, and according to your progreſs, ſuch will be the proportion of your Comfort, and perſevering in your courſe you will every day find your ſelf drawing nearer and nearer to Heaven; is it not ſo, *Sebaſtian*?

Sebaſt. True to a tittle, *Philander*, and ſo you, *Biophilus*, will find it, if you (as I hope you will) make the experiment; for though (as our good Friend

here hath well obſerved) the joys of Religion come in gradually, and not all at once; yet, like the riſing Sun, they are always growing higher and higher to a perfect Day of Glory, and (therein unlike to that) never more ſetting or ſhutting in upon us in a total darkneſs again; as ſoon as you ſet your Face towards Heaven, and begin to live conſcienciouſly, you ſhall find your mind eaſie, and your Spirits cheared with an admirable ſerenity; and when in conſequence of ſuch beginning, you worſhip God devoutly, you will find a comfort in his Preſence, and a ſweet ſenſe of him when you have finiſhed your duty; thence you will proceed to feel a motion of bravery in your mind to reſiſt all kind of ſin, and that will be followed with an unſpeakable Pleaſure and Glory in Victory over your Paſſions and corrupt Inclinations; and thenceforward Religion will grow eaſie and delightful to you, and you ſhall be able to look towards the other World with hope and deſire; and then finally the Holy Spirit will come into your Soul, and *ſeal you to the day of Redemption*, and give you ſuch a reliſh of the Glories above, that you ſhall deſpiſe the preſent World, and be able to look through the dark Vault of Death, and take a view of Heaven.

Bioph. Whatever the matter is, you two are able to raviſh any Man's Heart with this Diſcourſe, I am ſure you have filled

filled me with admiration, you have aſtoniſh'd me. But I pray what Religion muſt a Man be of, that he may make this experiment?

Sebaſt. Nay, ſure enough it muſt be *the Old Religion*, or you will loſe your labour. All Newfangles are mere cheats; they may ſerve Men to talk of, and make a noiſe with in the World, but they will never afford ſound comfort in a Man's need: ſo far from it, that they diſtract a Man with Novelty, and fill his Head with endleſs ſcrupuloſity. The way to Peace of Conſcience, and Spiritual Joy, is not to be of ſuch an Opinion, Sect, or Party, or to be zealous of ſuch a Mode or Ceremony; but to have a firm Faith in God, to live an Holy and Devout Life, this is the Old Religion, truly ſo called, for it is as old as Goſpel it ſelf, and conſequently is the tried way to ſolid Conſolation. But I pray, upon this occaſion, give me leave to ask you a bold Queſtion, What Religion are you of at preſent?

The Old Religion is the only comfortable Religion.

Bioph. It is a free Queſtion, I confeſs; but, (knowing whom I am amongſt) I will give you as free an Anſwer: truly, *Sebaſtian*, I am of no Religion at all, that I know of, unleſs you make me to be of one.

Phil. Then I do not wonder that you are ſuch a Stranger to the comforts of Religion, for it ſeems all was Romance to you (as you call'd it) but I hope, how-

ever, you do not look upon it as a modiſh Qualification, and a piece of Gallantry to be without Religion; take heed of that, good *Biophilus*, for *God will not be mocked.*

Bioph. You ſee I do not, *Philander*, but I know, on the other ſide, you would not have me diſſemble, and play the Hypocrite neither; and therefore I have told you the very truth.

Phil. You do very well in both thoſe particulars, but it's pity you ſhould not find out a middle between Scepticiſm and Hypocriſie, which you have now a fair opportunity to do; being in the company of *Sebaſtian*, if you pleaſe to make uſe of it.

Several occaſions of Mens being irreligious.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, *Biophilus*, you are one of the ſtrangeſt Men in the World, if this be true which you ſay of your ſelf; I pray give me leave to enquire how you came to be in this condition? I am confident you have not drowned your Religion in drink, (as ſome have done) for I take you to be a wiſer Man, and more careful of your Life and Health; and I am as confident that you have not careleſly loſt it in your Travels in Foreign Countries, as ſome young Gentlemen have done: What then! Hath the Hypocriſie of ſome high Pretenders (who either ridiculouſly over-acting their parts, or lewdly proſtituting Religion to baſe and villainous deſigns) made you aſhamed of it? Or (which hath been very common in this Age)

Age) have you run a wild round through all Opinions, till at laſt, being come about to the very Point you ſet out from, you thenceforth concluded with your ſelf according to the Proverb, *As good never a whit, as never the better* !

Bioph. You are very ingenious in your gueſſes, *Sebaſtian*, but all in vain; for you can never find what was never loſt, nor can I have loſt what I never had. I tell you again, I neither have, nor ever had any Religion that I know of.

Phil. You might well have ſpared thoſe laſt words, *Biophilus*; for I will undertake for you, you have no Religion indeed, if you do *not know of it*. Religion is not like a Diſeaſe, to be catch'd before we are aware, nor can it be impoſed upon us without our conſent and privity: beſides, it is ſo active and vigorous a Principle, that it will diſcover it ſelf; and a Man may as well carry Fire in his Boſome, and not be burnt, as carry Religion in his Heart, and not be ſenſible of it.

Sebaſt. You mightily increaſe my wonder; I am at a loſs how this could come to paſs: did you grow, like a Muſhrome, out of the Earth? Or what was the manner of your Education?

Ill Education.

Bioph. My Birth, *Sebaſtian*, was, I ſuppoſe, like other Mens, but, perhaps, my Breeding might have ſomething peculiar in it. For, amongſt other things, that happened to me, it fell out that one of thoſe Perſons, who ſhould eſpecially have taken

care of my Inſtitution, being a great Fanatick, was ſtrongly of the Opinion, that the Spirit of God (as his Phraſe was) muſt immediately, and by himſelf, effect all the good that is in any Man; and therefore he concluded it would not only be loſt labour, but a Derogation from the Grace of God, to make uſe of any means, or to be much concerned about my Education. And then for the reſt of them to whom I was committed in my minority, they were great Politicians, and pretended they ſhould conſult my Intereſt moſt by keeping me diſ-ingaged from any Party in Religion, that ſo I might be always at liberty to join my ſelf with that which ſhould prove moſt to my temporal advantage.

Philan. Swrewdly projected on both parts, in ſo much that it is hard to ſay whether the Divinity of the former, or the Politicks of the latter be the more wonderful.

Sebaſt. Here was a beginning bad enough, I confeſs, but then when you grew a Man, and became at your own diſpoſe, what kept you unreſolv'd in this great Affair?

Bioph. For that, I muſt tell you, that my ſetting out in the World fell about the late times of publick Diſtraction, and then I obſerved there were ſo many Religions, that it was not eaſie to reſolve which to chuſe, and upon that account I continued Neuter ſtill.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, there you were wanting to your ſelf, as much as your Guardians had been wanting to you before; for the more Diſputes concerning Religion there are in the World, it is far the greater probability that there is at leaſt ſome general truth amongſt them, though many of the particulars muſt needs be miſtaken: beſides, if you had conſidered that matter diligently, you would have found that few, or none of thoſe diſputes were about the Fundamentals of Religion, but only about certain Notions, or Modes and Forms, and you might have abſtracted from them, and been a good Chriſtian nevertheleſs.

Bioph. It may be ſo, and, I confeſs, I had ſometimes ſuch thoughts; but then whenever I began to look that way, there were thoſe brisk young Men about me, that, obſerving me to grow a little ſerious, would preach to me at this rate; What, *Biophilus*, do you grow weary of your Liberty? Do you not know there are Bonds in Religion, as well as in Matrimony? Are you not aware how it reſtrains the Pleaſures of Life, and damps all jollity? if once you let looſe that thing call'd Conſcience, it will coſt you a great deal of Art and Pains to hamper it again, and ſubdue it to your Intereſts. Do but obſerve (ſay they) that whenſoever any Man comes under the power of Religion, it abates his Courage and Bravery, and renders him tame and ſheepiſh, liable to be affron-

Ill Company betrays men to Atheiſm.

affronted by every body. In a word, ſaid they, all that which they call the fear of God, and concern for another World, is nothing but either the effect of Ignorance, Pedantry, or Hypocriſie; but to make our ſelves merry with both, is true Wit and Gallantry.

Phil. Lord, what pity it is that ſuch Men as you ſpeak of were not condemned to wear Fools Coats, or that they have not ſome mark ſet upon them, that Men might avoid them as Lepers, or Men infected with ſome ſuch loathſome and contagious Diſeaſe. I pray, Sir, what Opinion had you of that ſort of Men and the preachments they made?

The rudeneſs and barbarity of Atheiſts.

Bioph. To tell you the truth, I had not much better conceit of them my ſelf, than you have; for though they pretend to Wit, yet it is little more than impudence and ſcurrility; and, beſides that, they are rude towards the moſt general perſwaſion of Mankind; I obſerve withal, that the greateſt talkers, at that rate, are commonly Men that not only proſtitute their Reputation, but ſquander away their Eſtate, their Health and Lives alſo with ſuch incogitancy and prodigious folly, that I can by no means think their Judgment is to be relied upon in any ſerious matter; yet I muſt needs ſay ſomething ſtuck with me by the frequent Harangues and Converſation of ſuch Men.

Phil. I am in great hopes of you, *Biophilus*, that you will come over to us, now

now you betray the ſecrets of Atheiſm. You have revealed the very *Myſtery of Iniquity*; 'tis liberty to be lewd and wicked, and perfect licentiouneſs that is the ſecret root and cauſe of Atheiſm, and Men of a profligate ſenſe and debauch'd tempers, are the principal Advocates for it, and the ſworn Enemies to Religion, as indeed they are to every thing that is ſerious.

Sebaſt. *Biophilus* ſpeaks like a Man of ſenſe and ingenuity, and give me leave to ſay, Sir, I cannot tell whether I ought more to applaud the ſagacity of your mind, or to deplore the unhappineſs of your Education and Acquaintance; it is a thouſand pities the former ſhould lie under the fatal prejudices of the latter. And I ſhould account nothing to have befallen me in my whole Life more lucky or deſirable, than an opportunity of reſcuing ſuch a temper from ſuch a calamity. But, I pray, with the ſame ingenuity you have hitherto expreſs'd, tell me, have you gone away currantly with this incurioufneſs or unconcernedneſs for Religion? have you not ſometimes had conflicts within your ſelf upon the point we are upon?

The irreligious man's conflict with himſelf.

Bioph. I confeſs I have; for ſometimes, whenas I could not but obſerve this buſineſs of Religion to be the great Theme of the World, I mean to be that which the generality of Mankind are very buſie and ſollicitous about (for I can call to mind but

but very few who have not in ſome ſort or other pretended to it) and I take notice alſo, that moſt of the ſharpeſt diſputes and hotteſt conteſts are raiſed about it; ſurely then (thought I) theſe Men are in earneſt, and believe themſelves in this affair, and then why ſhould I make the adventure alone? it may become me in prudence to have ſome concern about it too: eſpecially when I conſidered and ſaw plainly that by the courſe of all the World I muſt ſhortly die; and foraſmuch as it was impoſſible for me to be certain what might or might not come afterwards, and what ſtrange Revolutions might ſucceed my going off the Stage of this World, within the compaſs of that vaſt tract of time which I was likely to leave behind me. Hereupon methought it became me in diſcretion to provide for the worſt. To all which I muſt add, That I have at ſeveral times had unaccountable qualms and miſ-givings of Heart (upon ſome of the foregoing Conſiderations, or ſomething of that nature) which not a little ſtartled me for the preſent; but then I endeavoured to check them as the effects of Melancholy and mere Panick Fears, notwithſtanding, in ſpight of my Heart, they would return upon me, and gave me ſuſpicion that they might have ſome other ground than I was aware of.

Sebaſt. Well, and would not theſe things prevail upon you to lay aſide your

your neutrality, and determine you to a ſerious Conſideration of Religion?

Bioph. No truly, they did not, for I had other thoughts came into my mind, which ſeemed to counter-balance the former, and brought me to an *æquilibrium*, or to hang in ſuch a ſuſpence as you now find me in; for I ſuſpected my ſuſpicions, and fell in doubt whether thoſe odd kind of bodeings and preſages of my own Mind, which I told you of, concerning God and a future State, might not proceed from the mere weakneſs and timidity of Humane Nature, or from Ignorance, Melancholy, or natural Superſtition, without any juſt and reaſonable Foundation. And then as for thoſe apprehenſions of Religion, which I obſerved to be generally in other Men, I therein ſuſpected the Arts of cunning Men and State-Politicians, who might poſſibly have deſigns to over-reach others into thoſe Perſwaſions which they had no ſenſe of themſelves. Upon ſuch Conſiderations as theſe, I was inclined on the other ſide, not to give my ſelf any trouble about that which ſeemed ſo dark and uncertain.

Devotion towards God is neither the effect of Ignorance, Cowardice, Superſtiti-

Seba. I pity you with all my Heart, *Biophilus*, and yet my wonder is almoſt equal to my pity, that a Man of your ſagacity ſhould be ſtaggered by ſuch groundleſs Phancies; and withal, I cannot but hope that your ſecond thoughts will eaſily aſſoil you in this caſe. For in the first

on, &c. but hath real and rational grounds.

first place, you cannot but have observed that many of the shrewdest Men in the World, are as much under an awful sense of Religion, as the most easie and injudicious. Nay, ordinarily, the more throughly learned and wise any Men are, the more hearty and earnest they are in this affair. From whence you cannot (without doing violence to your discretion) but conclude, that Religion and Devotion are far from being the mere effects of ignorance and imposture; whatever some shatter-brain'd and debauch'd Persons would fain perswade themselves and others.

And then in the second place, when you consider that the most brave and couragious do as well take sanctuary in Religion, and imbrace it as ardently as the most timorous and cowardly; you will have no more reason to impute the rise of Piety to pusillanimity or superstitious fears, than you had before to charge it upon folly and ignorance, or the cheats of Politicians, but must be forced to conclude this great business to be more deeply founded, and to depend upon higher Causes.

Bioph. You say well, Sir, and I should be apt to think so too, if I could learn what those higher Causes and deep Foundations are, which you speak of; and herein I would gladly have your advice, who (as I am perswaded) have too great a judgment to be led away with popular errors, and (I am confident) whose integrity

tegrity is ſuch as will not ſuffer you to be acceſſary to the impoſing upon me. Tell me therefore, I beſeech you, into what real cauſes I ought to reſolve, either thoſe private Impreſſions of Religion I have found in my ſelf, or thoſe more publick effects of it, which I have obſerved in others.

Sebaſt. Play the Man, *Biophilus*, and judge with your ſelf, into what cauſes ſhould you, or can you reſolve ſuch effects, but thoſe that are as real and ſubſtantial as the effects themſelves; namely, the plain reaſonableneſs of that thing (called Religion) approving it ſelf both to the inward ſenſe of your own mind, and to humane nature in general; that is to ſay, there is firſt a natural impreſs of Religion, which God hath left upon the Conſciences of Men, which is, as it were, the internal ſenſe of the Soul: and then when reaſon reflects alſo upon this buſineſs, humane judgment prudentially weighing and eſtimating the reaſons for it, and the Objections againſt it, together with the moment and importance of the thing, pronounces it upon due Conſideration, to be the prime and moſt neceſſary concern of Mankind.

Bioph. But if you will make me your Diſciple, I muſt intreat you to deal more expreſly, and particularly with me, and to open, to the very bottom, the Foundations of the thing in queſtion. And let me beg your pardon, if I tell you that you are obſerved to be a Man of ſuch Elo-

Eloquence, that you are able to wheedle a Man into your Opinion, be it what it can. But I pray deal plainly, and rationally with me, ſeeing that otherwiſe if I ſhould become your Convert, you will have but little credit by me, ſince, in that caſe, my zeal would be without knowledge, and my heat without light; and, beſides, (to wiſer Men) you will but ſeem to beg the Queſtion, and artificially to perſwade to that which you cannot prove. Therefore (as I intimated before) pray make me to underſtand, that Religion is as reaſonable in it ſelf, and in its Principles, as you have repreſented it to be important in the conſequences of it.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, but I have gone more than half way in that already; for having ſhewed you the conſequence of Religion to be ſuch, as that a Man can neither live nor die comfortably without it, there is therefore all the reaſon in the World for it. For he that proves a thing to be neceſſary, does more than prove it to be real.

Bioph. That was a ſide-blow, which I did not expect, I confeſs.

Prudence and Self-love oblige a Man to be religious.

Sebaſt. But it is an home thruſt to the buſineſs, it doth *jugulum petere* (as they ſay) for it obliges you as you are a Man, and pretend either to prudence, or Self-love, to apply your ſelf ſeriouſly to this affair; nay, if there ſhould be wanting ſuch other proofs as you require, you cannot reaſonably inſiſt upon that, for you will acknowledge

ledge that ſelf-preſervation is the firſt and ſureſt principle in Nature; and ſure that is good proof, which proves that Man to be worſe than a Fool who doth not follow it.

Bioph. That is home indeed: But let me tell you, it is one of my greateſt prejudices againſt Religion, that the moſt zealous Defenders of it talk of probable Arguments, and prudential Conſiderations, *&c.* Now, for my part, I require natural and direct proofs, and nothing leſs will ſatisfie me.

Sebaſt. And, good *Biophilus*, had you not ſuch given you in our laſt Conference, and that in the very point which you choſe to join iſſue upon?

Bioph. I muſt confeſs, in that one point, *of a Judgment to come*, you argued ſo ſhrewdly, that ſomething of it ſticks by me ſtill, but it may be it was becauſe I granted ſome things then for Civility ſake, which I will not be held to now; beſides, if you ſhould make out ſome ſingle point, and not the reſt, I ſhall be never the nearer: for it will but make a Diſpute and Confuſion in my Mind, and will come to no Iſſue: foraſmuch as if all thoſe things that are neceſſary to the Being, and to the Obligation of Religion, be not reſolved of, there can be no ſuch thing as it. I deſire therefore now to ſee your whole *Hypotheſis* laid together, and all the grounds of it ſubſtantially made out.

Sebaſt. Why, that is done to my hand,

and yours too, *Biophilus*, and you may ſave me the labour, if you pleaſe, by conſulting the incomparable *Hugo Grotius*, Biſhop *Wilkins*, or ſeveral other excellent Perſons (whom I need not name) who have performed this with exquiſite Learning and Judgment. And if you have not the Books by you, I will furniſh you with any of them.

The advantage of Conference above reading of Books in this debate of Religion.

Bioph. I thank you for the kind offer; but, with your leave, I will ſtick to my firſt Requeſt, that we may diſcuſs this matter between our ſelves; both becauſe in this way of Conference you can explain your ſelf to me more fully, if I ſhould not reach your meaning at firſt; and beſides, I do not love that other Men ſhould make my Anſwers or Objections for me, but had rather make them my ſelf, (as beſt knowing where the Shooe pinches.)

Sebaſt. If you will have it ſo, I am content to be at your ſervice to the uttermoſt of my power; but let me tell you by the way, that, though I take offence at nothing, yet I a little wonder'd at the caution you put in (even now) againſt Eloquence; what did you mean, *Biophilus?* What was you afraid of? For my part, I can pretend to no other Skill, than to render thoſe things plain and eaſie, that were before true and reaſonable, or at moſt to be able to deliver hard Arguments in ſoft words. Now, is an Argument ever the ſtronger for being crabbed and rough? Or the weaker, or leſs effectual, for being ſmooth

ſmooth and oily? Is it ſuch a pleaſure to be non-plus'd in Mood and Figure, that you had rather be ſnap'd in the Mouſe-trap of a Sillogiſm, than treated Socratically and gentilely? I promiſe you, I will uſe no Legerdemain, no Slight of Hand with you; or if I ſhould go about it, you are too ſagacious to be impoſed upon by me. If you have a phancy for ſcholaſtick Gibberiſh, and love to be cramp'd with an *Ergo*, I am not altogether to ſeek in that way neither: but, if you give me leave, I would rather chuſe that way of diſcourſing which we have held hitherto, as that which is leaſt apt to raiſe any heat or paſſion, and which will the moſt plainly and naturally repreſent the truth of things to you.

Bioph. Nay, marry, in ſuch a caſe as this, I have as little phancy for chopping of Logick, as for the long wheedles of Rhetorick; I require only (as I ſaid) ſubſtantial proofs; and ſo your Arguments be ſtrong, I care not how ſoft and ſilken the lines be. Go on therefore in your own way, *in God's Name.*

Sebaſt. I, that was well thought of indeed; for without *God's Bleſſing* we ſhall loſe all our labour: which that we may not do, let us both beg of him to guide our Minds in this affair, and let me alſo requeſt of you, *Biophilus*, that you will grant me theſe two or three reaſonable things, which are ſo very neceſſary to the ſucceſs of our debate, that I ſhall be able to calcu-

late the iſſue of it, from your ingenuity in the conceſſion of them.

Bioph. Without more words, what are your demands?

Preliminaries to the diſpute about Religion.

Sebaſt. In the firſt place, I deſire that you will wholly lay aſide all Drollery, in the management of this cauſe, not only becauſe the buſineſs we are upon (as I hope you ſhall acknowledge by and by) is too weighty and ſolemn to be lightfully, and triflingly dealt withal; but eſpecially, becauſe this wanton trick of Drollery, is the only engine in the World that can do miſchief to Religion. Reaſon, with all its batteries, can never ſhake it; Experience can never confute it; the greateſt ſhrewdneſs and ſagacity can never diſcover any flaws in it: but there is no fence againſt this flail of profane and ſcurrilious Drollery, that, with its apiſh tricks and Buffoonry, is able to render, not only the wiſeſt Man in the World, but the moſt ſolid and ſubſtantial truth, ridiculous. And therefore I have obſerved that ſpeculative Atheiſts are commonly well gifted this way; and the beſt of their Game is to put off that with a Jeſt, which they can never anſwer with all the Wit they have.

Againſt wanton Wit and Drollery in religious matters.

Bioph. 'Tis granted; I will be very ſerious: what would you more?

Sebaſt. My next demand is, That you will not doubt without cauſe, or ſome reaſon aſſignable of your doubting or denying any thing in Religion: for beſides that otherwiſe the humour of doubting is

is endleſs and infinite, and a Man may at this rate doubt and deny the things that are moſt evident in nature, and even the principles of Diſcourſe it ſelf, as well as of Religion; beſides this, I ſay, to doubt and deny thus groundleſly and licentiouſly or peeviſhly, is not ſo much properly to doubt, as plainly to ſhew an unwillingneſs we have that the thing we diſpute about ſhould be true, which is cowardly and diſingenuous.

Doubting without end, and denying without ground, are the uſual methods of Atheiſts.

There is, certainly, a modeſty, or a kind of gentile carriage due to all diſputes, eſpecially of this nature as we are upon; and it is not allowable to be carping and captious, or to make uſe of little tricks and ſhifts to evade and put off an Argument inſtead of anſwering it. And let me tell you, this I have obſerved to be the uſual method of the Adverſaries of Religion. They will put a Man to prove every thing, even the moſt ſelf evident Propoſition: and one queſtion ſhall beget another, and that another, only to perplex the cauſe, and to ſtave off the concluſion: or when a Man hath given very reaſonable evidence of the point, they will yet put it off with, It may be otherwiſe; as if nothing could be true, but what is impoſſible to be otherwiſe: which is as abſurd, as if when a Man hath with the greateſt care and choice of his Materials, and according to the beſt Rules of Architecture built an Houſe, he ſhould yet be afraid to dwell in it when all is done, merely becauſe you cannot prove it

to be impoſſible but that ſuch an Houſe may preſently fall and oppreſs him in its Ruine.

Bioph. Be ſecure of me in that point alſo, I will diſcourſe fairly and ingenuouſly, and weigh the force of your Arguments with the beſt judgment I have: is that all you would have?

Sebaſt. There is but one thing more I would ask, and indeed that is implied in what you have yielded already; but that we may not miſtake one another, I will mention it, *viz.* That you will be willing to believe Religion, if you ſee reaſon for it.

Bioph. That is not an ingenuous demand, *Sebaſtian*, if I underſtand you: for whilſt you ſeem to ask my conſent, you plainly beg your cauſe; whereas you are to prove it with that evidence, as to make me believe it whether I will or no.

Nothing can make a man believe againſt his will.

Sebaſt. There it is now, that makes the neceſſity of my demand apparent: for it is a mighty miſtake, *Biophilus*, to think that any Arguments whatſoever can be ſufficient to make a Man believe whether he will or no. It is a great queſtion whether God Almighty can make any Man believe againſt his will: indeed it ſeems a Contradiction to ſuppoſe it. He hath given Men Freedom of Will, and *put them in the hand of their own counſel*; bid them make their Election, chuſe Life or Death: by which means as wiſe and good Men have the Glory and Comfort

to

to co-operate towards their own happineſs; ſo perverſe and obſtinate Men have the ſhame and remorſe of being guilty of their own Deſtruction. For when both Parties have light to guide them, and Motives and Arguments to perſwade them, the one ingenuouſly complies, but the other wilfully refuſes, and imploys the Prerogative of his nature, both againſt God, and his own Soul.

But in an humane way, it is plainly impoſſible: for if a Man have taken up his Poſt, which he reſolves to maintain, it is not in the power of reaſon to remove him from it; the will is immovable by any thing but it ſelf, and reaſon is no equal match for it. Now this is the caſe of a great part of the Adverſaries to Religion, and this is the main diſadvantage of its cauſe, that ſuch Men have no mind it ſhould be true; and then, *non perſuadebis etiamſi perſuaſeris*, they will hold the Concluſion in ſpight of the Premiſſes: and this is the reaſon why I require of you to be willing to believe, before I begin my Argument; not that I require you ſhould believe without proof, but that you ſhould not oppoſe prejudice to my Argument, but be true to your reaſon and to the evidence that ſhall be given.

Bioph. If that be all you mean, 'tis granted alſo; and now that you have done with your Cautions, before you enter upon the buſineſs, I muſt ask one thing of you, namely, That in this Socratical

way of diſcourſing (as you call it) you will not be too prolix in your Arguments, heaping one conſequence upon the neck of another, till they make ſo long a train, that a Man cannot ſee from end to end, but deal conciſely and decretorily, that I may be brought as compendiouſly as may be to the point you drive at.

Shortneſs of reaſon and impatience of the whole proceſs of an Argument, is the fatal miſcarriage of Atheiſts.

Sebaſt. Indeed, *Biophilus*, if I had thought of it, I ought to have cautioned againſt that very thing which you now demand: for this is another capital miſtake in thoſe Men that are Strangers to theſe matters, and which hath the fatal miſchief to confirm a great many in Atheiſm, they expect to jump into the full underſtanding of Religion preſently, whenſoever they make it the ſubject of their Diſcourſe; and if it be not decided in one Syllogiſm or two, they immediately begin a triumph, and conclude it is a thing cannot be proved at all by reaſon. I confeſs to you that God, in compaſſion to Mankind, hath diſcovered a ſhort cut over to the other World; I mean a very compendious way to a full knowledge of, and ſatisfaction in, all the Myſteries of Religion, and that is by the *Holy Scripture*, which he deviſed on purpoſe, becauſe ſome Mens Capacities will not reach to a long Argument, and the occaſions and buſie life of others will not give them leiſure to attend the difficult and laborious proceſs of reaſon. But becauſe you reject that, and will not permit

God

God Almighty to judge for you, but will be your own judge in the caſe; therefore you muſt have patience in this way of Probation you put me upon. For if a Man will take nothing for current Coin, but what he hath wrought out of the Ore himſelf, nor believe any thing to be truth but what he hath drawn out of the depth by his own skill and ſtrength, he muſt be content to take a great deal of pains, and be at the expence of a great deal of time, before he can arrive at Satisfaction; however, I hope, you ſhall have no occaſion to accuſe me of tedioufneſs in this Argument.

Bioph. You ſpeak reaſon, I confeſs, and I yield you this together with all your other Preliminaries: Now therefore to the buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Know then, *Biophilus*, (without any farther Preface) that all this great Fabrick of Religion ſtands upon theſe three Pillars, *viz.*

The three Pillars of Religion, and the ſtreſs that lies on each of them.

Firſt, That there is a God, as the Object of Devotion and Religious Obſervance.

Secondly, That this God exerciſes a Providence over his Creatures, and Mankind eſpecially; and ſo by obſerving how they carry themſelves towards him, and conſequently being able to reward or puniſh them accordingly, lays an Obligation upon them to obſerve and worſhip him.

Thirdly, That Mankind is a Subject capable of ſuch an Obligation, and of paying

paying ſuch Devotion and Obſervance to the Deity.

Miſtake me not: I ſay, upon all theſe three together in Conjunction doth the truth and reality of Religion depend, but if any one of them was wanting, it will be manifeſt that Religion would vaniſh into a Romance, and come to nothing.

For in the firſt place, If there were no God, it would not only be certain that there is nothing to whom Religion could be due, but it would be as certain that there could be no Providence nor other Conſideration to inforce the care of it; and then conſequently let the Conſtitution of Mankind be as capable of noble performances as can be imagined, yet there could be no ground nor foundation of Religion.

Again, If we ſhould acknowledge the Being of a God, and him alſo fit to be worſhipped; yet if there be no Providence, ſo that this God doth not mind whether Men ſerve or diſſerve him, and conſequently could not reward or puniſh accordingly, though it might in this caſe be fanſied to be a decent thing for all Creatures to pay ſome kind of homage to ſo excellent a Being; yet there can be no danger to them if they do not ſo, and conſequently no ſufficient obligation upon them to perform it.

And laſtly, If there be both a God and a Providence acknowledged, and conſequently

quently an Obligation to Religion: yet if Mankind be not a ſubject capable of it; that is, if either he hath it not in his power to know God's Will, or it is not in his choice to ſerve or diſſerve him, the buſineſs of Religion cannot concern him, nor can it be expected from him.

But if all theſe three things meet, and prove certainly true, then is this buſineſs of Religion fully founded, and as immoveable as the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, as I ſaid, the firſt Propoſition deſcribes the Object, the third qualifies the Subject, and the ſecond lays the Obligation of Religion, which is all that can be required in the caſe.

Bioph. You begin very ſhrewdly, I proteſt, and like a Man that would do the buſineſs at laſt. Your Argument is cloſe and ſubſtantial, your Enumeration of particulars exact, and your Conſequence undeniable: I ſay, if thoſe three things be proved, which yet you only ſuppoſe; the pinch of the buſineſs therefore lies in the proof of thoſe three Aſſertions; and if you are able to make out the truth of them ſeverally, as you have done the conſequence of Religion from the acknowledgment of them jointly, I muſt turn over a new leaf, and be a Proſelyte, there is no help for it. Firſt therefore, how do you prove there is a God?

Sebaſt. Ah, *Biophilus*, hath not God given ſufficient proof of himſelf to your own Heart and Conſcience, by the lively impreſſes

impreſſes he hath made of himſelf there; and hath he not made Demonſtration of his Divinity to all the World by all his Operations, eſpecially by the Creation of this mighty Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, and all that admirable Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which ſhines through the whole frame of Nature? This (let me tell you) is the proof of himſelf, which he himſelf appeals to, *Pſal.* 19. 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſetteth forth his handy work.* And again, *Rom.* 1. 22. *The inviſible things of him are ſeen by the creation of the world,* &c.

Bioph. What pity it is that ſo brave a beginning ſhould come off thus poorly! I did ſuſpect it would come to this; but could you think, *Sebaſtian*, that I would be born down with the Authority of an old Book in ſuch a caſe as this is? no, no, I muſt have my reaſon ſatisfied: I ſay again therefore, how do you prove there is a God?

The proof of the Being of God.

Sebaſt. You are, I perceive, as quick in replying as you are ſlow in believing; however I am glad, that though you are incredulous, you are not humourſome too. Some Man perhaps in your place would have ſaid, Let me ſee a God; but it ſeems you are content to have your reaſon ſatisfied. Now do not miſtake me, *Biophilus*, I did not intend to urge you with the Authority of thoſe Sacred Writers, but with the force of the Argument they make uſe of. Tell me then in earneſt, how

how do you ſatisfie your reaſon concerning the exiſtence of any thing which you do not ſee? or, in brief; Do you not think that to be ſufficient proof of the Being of a Cauſe, when it is made out by its Effects?

Bioph. Yes, I do; for if I ſee (*Phænomena*, or) appearances of things, which I can give no account of without reſolving them into ſuch a cauſe, then I conclude ſuch a cauſe muſt be as real as thoſe appearances or effects are.

Sebaſt. Very good, then I tell you, after the ſame manner I prove there is a God, namely, becauſe there are ſuch effects as ſpeak and neceſſarily require ſuch a Cauſe.

Bioph. Now you are right again, make that out and you do your work.

Sebaſt. That there is ſuch a thing as that which we call the World, or this great building of Heaven and Earth, with all the Furniture and Inhabitants of it, this I am ſure you will grant; but how this World came to be what it is, is to be conſidered of: Now, ſay I, as Art betrays an Artiſt, and the Effect the Cauſe; ſo doth the Being of a World ſpeak a God that made it. The mere exiſtence of ſuch a thing as a World, requires that there be a Cauſe of that exiſtence, and that is it which we mean by a *firſt Cauſe*; and then the admirable art and plain footſteps of skill and contrivance, which are viſible in the frame of this

this World, require that this firſt Cauſe be wiſe and powerful, which is the more *compleat Notion of a God.* So that (as I ſaid) ſo ſurely as there is a World, ſo ſurely there muſt be a God; foraſmuch as if there had not been a God to make it, there could have been nothing at all: is not this plain proof, *Biophilus*, and ſuch as you required?

Bioph. Very far from it I aſſure you (if my underſtanding fail me not) for, in the firſt place, why might not the World make it ſelf? Or, ſecondly, why might it not be from Eternity, without beginning? Or, laſtly, why might it not be made by chance? All which Opinions, you know, have had their reſpective Patrons. Now any of theſe ways (it is evident, that) your Argument for a God comes to nothing.

That the World could not make it ſelf.

Sebaſt. God help you, *Biophilus*; Did not you promiſe that you would not ſeek to ſhift off the Arguments I ſhould bring for this cauſe, by little querks and evaſions? And can you ſo ſoon find in your heart to give countenance to the moſt exploded abſurdities? Nay, to ſwallow the moſt palpable contradictions, rather than yield to reaſon for the belief of a God. And that this is your caſe, is evident enough, by the multitude of ſhifts you muſter together at this preſent: For I aſſure my ſelf, if you durſt have truſted to any one of theſe ſingly, you would have inſiſted on that, and not mentioned the other; and you know, if each of them ſingle are abſurd, the combination of them all together,

ther, cannot mend the matter, nor make a reaſonable Objection againſt the Argument I have brought.

Bioph. You ſay well, but then you muſt make it appear that all theſe are mere ſubterfuges, otherwiſe they muſt ſtand for a ſufficient anſwer: and, I pray you, in the firſt place, why might not the World make it ſelf? and then there is no need of a God.

Sebaſt. Even for this ſmall reaſon the World could not make it ſelf, becauſe it implies a flat Contradiction: for then it muſt be Cauſe and Effect, in the ſame reſpect, and at the ſame time; *i. e.* it muſt act before it was, and be before it ſelf: in a word, it muſt be and not be together, and if that be not abſurd enough, I know not what is ſo.

Bioph. I confeſs, you ſeem to have loaded that conceit with *odium* enough; but then, how comes it to paſs that the Men of your Perſwaſion digeſt all this impoſſibility well enough in another way, when they ſay, God had his Being from himſelf, or gave Being to himſelf? if this can be true, I ſee not but the other may.

Sebaſt. Very right, Sir, for either of them is impoſſible: but you miſtake (the Men of my Perſwaſion, as you call them) for there is no Man of ſenſe will ſay or mean, that poſitively God gave Beginning or Being to himſelf; but only negatively, that he had not his Being from any other Cauſe; that is, he is properly an Eternal neceſſary Being, without any Cauſes

ſes, or beginning at all: and if you go about to apply this to the World, you forſake your firſt hold, and fly to your ſecond refuge.

Bioph. I am ſenſible of what you ſay. I confeſs, my firſt Objection is not tenable; but what ſay you then to the ſecond? Why may not the World be Eternal? And then you ſeem to grant there can be no neceſſity of a God.

Sebaſt. To your ſecond Evaſion I oppoſe theſe three things, which when you have conſidered of, I doubt not but you will ſee it to be no better than the former. Namely, firſt, I will ſhew you that you can gain nothing by it, if it ſhould be true. Secondly, That the Suppoſition of it is more difficult and incredible, than that which you ſeek to avoid by it: and, Thirdly, That it is impoſſible it ſhould be true.

That the World could not be from Eternity.

Firſt, You can gain nothing towards the Satisfaction of your Mind, or for the eaſing you of any Difficulty, by aſſerting the Eternity of the World. For the greateſt difficulty in the whole buſineſs of Religion, and indeed in all Philoſophy too, is, to acknowledge ſuch a thing as an Eternal Being, or any thing that hath neither cauſes nor beginning, which here you ſwallow without chewing, in ſuppoſing the World to be Eternal.

It is true indeed, if a Man look to the very bottom of things, it is not to be avoided, but that ſome Eternal, and ſelf-exiſtent

exiſtent Being muſt be granted. For ſeeing nothing can give Being to it ſelf (as I ſhew'd you but now) it is plain that either ſomething muſt have been without beginning, or nothing could have been at all; *i. e.* there muſt be either an Eternal God, or ſome eternal Cauſe or other, or nothing could ever have been in time. For whatever firſt begins to be, muſt take its riſe from ſomething that had no beginning.

This, I ſay, muſt neceſſarily be yielded by every conſidering Man, and you confeſs as much, when, to avoid the acknowledgment of a God, you ſuppoſe the World to be eternal. Now in ſo doing you bring in as great a difficulty (at leaſt) as that which you would ſeem to avoid; for the belief of an Eternal Being is manifeſtly the hardeſt thing to conceive in the whole Notion of a God: ſo that (as I ſaid) you expedite no difficulty thereby, but only plainly betray an unwillingneſs to believe there is a God, and that is all that comes of it.

Nay, ſecondly, This Suppoſition of yours is far more difficult than that which it is deſigned to avoid. For it is apparently more unreaſonable to allow Eternity to the World than to God; becauſe to be eternal, or to be without cauſe and beginning, implies a neceſſity of exiſtence, or that ſuch a thing could not but be: for nothing can be conceived to be without Efficient or Cauſe of its Being,

but that which could not but be, or which was impoſſible not to be. Now I dare appeal to you whether it be not more reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a ſuperlatively excellent kind of Being, to be the privilege of a wiſe, powerful and free Agent (by which we mean a God) than to apply it to that Lump of Matter (which we call the World) or (which amounts to the ſame thing) whether it be not more likely that this wonderful Prerogative of firſt being, or neceſſity of exiſtence (which you acknowledge muſt be ſeated ſomewhere) ſhould be accompanied with Life, Underſtanding, Freedom of Will, *&c.* all which are in the Notion of a God, than that ſuch a Prerogative ſhould go alone, and ſo the firſt and principal Being, be in effect one of the meaneſt, as being deſtitute of all thoſe other Perfections, as muſt needs be, if the World be that firſt and Eternal Being.

Eſpecially if you caſt in this alſo, that neither you nor any rational Man would ever have gone about to fanſie the World's being neceſſarily exiſtent or without beginning, but only for want of a God to make it (I mean upon account of the difficulty of underſtanding ſuch a Being as is required in the caſe;) now foraſmuch as that includes no greater difficulty, than what you are conſtrained to acknowledge without a God, it is extreamly unjuſt to rely upon it as a ſufficient Objection againſt him.

But,

But, thirdly and laſtly, This Suggeſtion of yours concerning the Eternity of the World is plainly impoſſible to be true: as it were eaſie to make out in any of the ſeveral parts or parcels, of which it conſiſts. But I will content my ſelf to ſhew it you in the inſtance of Mankind only, and that after this manner.

If Mankind was from Eternity or without Beginning, then it muſt conſequently be acknowledged that there have been infinite Succeſſions of Men, one after another, and that ſome of thoſe Generations have been infinitely diſtant from others. For all this is implied in infinite Succeſſion, or the Eternity of ſucceſſive Beings. But now let us take what link we will of this Chain, I mean, let us take what Man ſoever in this infinite line, it is certain he will be but Thirty, or Forty, or an Hundred Years (more or leſs) elder than ſome Son of his, which proceeded from him by lineal Deſcent. And then it is as plain that in this caſe, that Son of his (whoever he was) is not eternal or of infinite Duration, becauſe he is of leſs Duration than his Father, by the ſaid Thirty or Forty Years (or more or leſs;) and on the other ſide, it is plain alſo, that the Father cannot be eternal, or of infinite Duration neither, becauſe he is but Thirty or Forty Years (as aforeſaid) elder than the ſaid Son who was finite. For a finite number added to a finite can never make an infinite.

Therefore (upon the whole) this race of Mankind cannot be infinite, but muſt have had a beginning, and conſequently there muſt be a God who gave beginning to him, and to all things elſe. What think you now, *Biophilus*? what is become of your ſecond Evaſion of a God, by ſuppoſing the World to be Eternal?

Bioph. Truly I cannot well tell what to ſay, but that I am deceived in you; I ſuſpected you would have entertained me with long Harangues, and have wheedled me with Oratory: but I fear now you will run me down by main force, unleſs there be ſome trick of Sophiſtry in it.

Sebaſt. God forbid that I ſhould *tell a lye for him*, whoſe Cauſe needs not to be defended by a Cheat; no, aſſure your ſelf the Argument is ſound and ſubſtantial, if I had known the leaſt flaw in it, I would never have made uſe of it; and I am confident, the more you conſider it, the more ſolid and unanſwerable you will find it.

That the World was not made by Chance.

Bioph. Then I perceive, I am reduced to my laſt refuge, that the World was made by Chance, or elſe I muſt yield you there is a God; and why may not that be true, which a great Sect of Philoſophers, I mean the Epicureans, held, *viz.* That ſome lucky hit of Matter at laſt produced the World without a God? and if once things were gotten into Being without him, there could be no neceſſity afterwards to introduce him, and conſequently no obligation of Religious Obſervance towards him.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. In thoſe laſt words you reaſon very well, *Biophilus*, and it's pity you had not a better Hypotheſis to exerciſe it upon. For it is very true, that if it was poſſible to imagine a World to be made any other way, or without a God, there could be no ſufficient reaſon to bring him upon the Stage, or much leſs any Religious Obligation towards him; and therefore doubtleſs it was only Hypocriſie and a piece of Cunning in your Epicurean Friends, to bring in a God when they had fanſied the making of the World without him: the former they did to decline the *odium* of flat Atheiſm, and to ſecure themſelves from the danger of Humane Laws; but by the latter they undermined the reaſons of Religion, which was the thing they aimed at. But as to that Hypotheſis of theirs, which you now eſpouſe, it is the moſt miſerable ſhift of all you have made. For,

1. This takes for granted, That the matter of the World exiſted of it ſelf and was Eternal, which I doubt not but hath appeared abſurd enough by what hath been ſaid already upon the former Head.

2. It ſuppoſes alſo matter to be in motion, without any cauſe of that motion; which is worſe than the former, ſince we can never ſatisfie our ſelves that motion naturally belongs to matter, but contrariwiſe, that it is only paſſive, and capable

of receiving it from ſomething elſe. Now till theſe two things be proved, it is in vain to dream what lucky hits might happen in order to the Production of a World.

3. It ſuppoſes mere Chance and blind Contingency to be the ſole cauſe of the moſt Wiſe, Regular and Artificial Effects that can be imagined. Now it ſeems beyond meaſure ridiculous to think that ſuch a World as this plainly is, wherein there are undeniably all the footſteps of the moſt exquiſite skill and contrivance; wherein (I ſay) there is both ſuch admirable variety of things, and yet ſuch exact order and correſpondence of one thing with another, and withal ſuch conſtancy in the Laws of the whole, that this ſhould be effected notwithſtanding, without any reaſon or wiſdom, and be the product of blind Chance. It were certainly a thouſand times more manly to imagine that Books were written by the caſual coincidence of Letters, or Houſes and Ships were built by a fortuitous jumble of Stones, Iron and Timber, than that Chance ſhould make ſuch a World as this, which for Greatneſs, Order, Symmetry and Beauty, and all other inſtances of Art and Wiſdom, infinitely ſurpaſſes all humane performances whatſoever: and now, what is become of your three formidable Objections?

Bioph. Nay, do not triumph too ſoon, *Sebaſtian*, the Field is not yet won; for I have

have a reſerve that may chance put you to it ſtill, and it is this; You have I confeſs, argued ſmartly to prove the World could not be made without an Efficient, but you forget that this will recoil upon your ſelf, who have taken no care for matter out of which God ſhould make a World; and ſure it is as difficult to want Matter as to want an Architect.

Sebaſt. It is very true, I have not, in my Hypotheſis provided matter for the making of the World, but yet I have proved an eternal, perfect and unlimited Being for the Efficient, who may very well be ſuppoſed to be able to ſupply the want of that out of his own eminent Perfection: for it is certain that the firſt and ſupreme Cauſe muſt needs have the Root and Seeds of all things in himſelf, and eminently contain all the powers of inferiour cauſes, and conſequently may well be ſuppoſed able to ſupply a material Cauſe, at leaſt here is no contradiction in all this, and therefore it cannot be ſaid to be impoſſible, (for nothing can be juſtly pronounced to be the latter, but what falls under the former) but now for motion to begin without a mover, and any thing to be effected without an active cauſe, is plainly contradictious to our Reaſon, and therefore to be pronounced impoſſible.

God needed not Matter out of which to make a World.

You ſee an inſtance, or at leaſt ſome kind of reſemblance of the former in our ſelves; we frame thoughts out of the pregnancy of our own minds without any matter to make them of, and therefore we may much rather allow God to be able to do ſo.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you that God had matter at hand out of which to make a World, you would be at the ſame loſs ſtill to know how he was able to make Souls out of it; and ſuch things there are in the World, which it is every whit as difficult to ſhew how they can be extracted out of matter, as to ſuppoſe matter it ſelf to be ſupplied by the unconfined power of the Supreme Agent; and therefore you had as good reſt ſatisfied in the anſwer above, *viz.* That for any thing to begin to be without an Efficient is contradictious, but to begin to be without a material Cauſe can never be proved to be ſo. And now, I hope, your Reſerve is vanquiſhed as well as your Main Body, and you will now acknowledge that, notwithſtanding all your Objections to the contrary, the mere Fabrick of the World is a ſufficient evidence of a God.

Phil. I have with great Satisfaction heard all this long Diſpute between you my two Friends; I could not in Conſcience take your part, *Biophilus*, and I know

Sebaſti-

Sebaſtian, you need not my aſſiſtance, and I am glad to ſee Victory begin to incline to the right ſide: but all this while I could not chuſe but ſtand and admire the Divine Patience, who ſuffers the curious and ingrateful wit of Man to impeach his very Being. Lord! that thoſe who were brought into the World by him, ſhould ſo ſtrenuouſly endeavour to exclude him out of it; and that thoſe ſhould muſter up all their wits againſt him, that made them to differ from the Beaſts.

It is matter of juſt wonder that Men ſhould be ſo unwilling to believe a God, and take ſo much pains to diſpute him out of Being.

But what ſhould be the occaſion of this I cannot imagine, nor what ſhould tempt Men to be ſo unwilling to believe a God. If like (what the Poets ſay of) *Saturn*, he eat up his own Children; or like *Moloch*, the Idol of the *Ammonites*, he could be pretended to take delight in the ſad cries and dying groans of his Worſhippers, they could not well do more againſt him than they do.

Or if he was a ſevere Tyrant, that lay at catch for his Subjects, and like *Buſyris* or *Phalaris*, imploy'd himſelf wholly in deviſing Tortures for them; or if he was a God of mere Power and Will, and ſo always to be horribly dreaded, becauſe Men know not what uſe he would make of his unlimited Power, no wonder then if they were willing to be rid of him.

Or if he was only (Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς) a mere neceſſary Agent, that only ſerved a certain turn in the World, namely,

to

to give beginning to Motion, then when that work was done, Men might perhaps be content to ſpare him.

But ſince he is perfect Wiſdom, and perfect Goodneſs, and in one word, Perfection it ſelf, containing in his own Nature all that is deſirable, the firſt of Beings, and therefore can want nothing, becauſe there was nothing before him to reſtrain or limit him, and becauſe all things were in him as in their Fountain, infinitely full and ſelf-ſufficient, that he can need nothing from his Creatures, nor can grudge them any thing that is fit for them.

A God that made us merely out of the over-flowings of his own Goodneſs, and that he might have thoſe whom he might delight and make happy in the Communications of himſelf to them.

That God is a deſireable Being, &c.

A God that is always preſent to us, tender of us, and daily doth us good in this World, and hath provided an Heaven of unſpeakable felicity to receive us into, and treat us in, when he takes us hence.

What can tempt us, I ſay, to wiſh he were not, to diſpute his Being, or ſo much as to entertain a doubt concerning him, who is the moſt deſirable thing in the whole World?

Come, *Biophilus*, lay down your Arms, and ſubmit to this great and good God, and he will pardon you; you diſpute all this while againſt your ſelf and your own Com-

Comfort more than againſt him. There is no contending with the Almighty, he can confute you with Thunder, and Fire, and Brimſtone, and ſo he might right himſelf, but then you will periſh; but he is pitiful and gracious, and had rather you ſhould be ſenſible of his Goodneſs, than feel the effects of his Power. You ſaid, reaſon would ſatisfie you, and I think you have had it from *Sebaſtian*; deal ingenuouſly therefore; Do you not ſee ſufficient ground to believe there is a God? It is no diſhonour to yield to truth.

Bioph. I perceive I am aſſaulted on both ſides, like the Traveller in the Fable, by the Sun and the Wind; *Sebaſtian* hath preſs'd hard upon me by Arguments, and you, *Philander*, have charmed me with your Eloquence, and the lovely Picture you have drawn of God. I can no longer withſtand you, I yield, I yield there is a God.

Sebaſt. God be thanked we are gotten one ſtep onwards of our way towards Religion, we have a God to worſhip; but I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs to you (as I have intimated already) that this will not do the buſineſs if we go no farther. For though in conſideration that there is a God, and he a great and excellent Being, it may be fit and decent to worſhip him; yet this hath not the effect of a Law, nor ſufficiently obliges any Creature to the doing of it, unleſs it appear alſo that this God exerciſe a Providence over the World,

That there is a Providence in

and over the World, is the second Principle of Religion.

World, that is, unleſs he obſerve the Carriage, remark the Actions, whether good or evil, of thoſe he expects Religious Obſervance from, and will ſome way or other call them to account, and reward or puniſh them reſpectively. But if this ſecond point be made out too, this will bring the buſineſs home, and make it the great concern of all thoſe that love themſelves, to be Devout and Religious.

Bioph. I am very ſenſible of it, *Sebaſtian*, and that not only becauſe my old Maſter *Epicurus* granted a God, but, denying a Providence, thought himſelf ſecure enough from that God, and under no Obligations to Religion; but alſo becauſe your own Method, which you have laid down, requires it: let that therefore be your next undertaking.

Sebaſt. It ſhall be ſo, *Biophilus*, and that not only for the Reaſons you give me for ſo doing, but alſo becauſe I am aware, that although the Argument I made uſe of for the proof of the Being of God, be ſtrong and unanſwerable, yet I confeſs it was ſomething obſcure and metaphyſical (which there was no help for) but now if I make out that there is a Providence, this will add both light and ſtrength to what I have hitherto diſcourſed. For though it may be imagined that there is a God, and yet no Providence, yet it is indubitable, that if there be a Providence, there muſt be a God.

Now

Now that there is ſuch a Providence as we ſpeak of, I doubt not to convince any conſiderate Man of, theſe two ways, *viz.*

1. From the Cauſes and Reaſons of it.

2. From the viſible Inſtances and Effects of it.

Proofs of a Providence.

In the firſt place, There is very great reaſon to aſſure ones ſelf that God exerciſes a Providence over the World from the Conſideration of thoſe Perfections, which (by what hath been ſaid already) appear to be in the Divine Nature, namely, Infinite Wiſdom and Power, both which we muſt neceſſarily aſcribe to him, whom we allow to be Creator of the World. Now there can be no reaſon to doubt, whether it be in his power to look over and mind all the paſſages of the World, when we have acknowledged his power to have been ſufficient to give beginning to that which was not, and to make a World out of nothing, which is incomparably the more difficult Province.

And then if we are ſatisfied that ſuch a Providence is not impoſſible, the ſame Wiſdom which joined with his Power in making the World, will oblige him to exert and put forth himſelf in the management of it when he hath made it. For it is not conceivable that a wiſe Being ſhould wholly abandon and be unconcerned for that piece of Workmanſhip of his

his wherein he hath made the greateſt demonſtration of Art and Skill in the contrivance of. Such a ſupine negligence as this is not eaſily to be ſuſpected in the meaneſt of intelligent Beings; and therefore there can be no colour of reaſon that the firſt and moſt perfect of Beings ſhould be thought guilty of it.

This I take to be a ſufficient Argument of a Providence between you and me, now that you are come to the acknowledgment of a God and Creatour of the World; but I will not inſiſt upon it, becauſe I promiſed to give ſuch evidence of this Point, as ſhould at the ſame time (and *à majori*, as they ſay) conclude the former Principle alſo, I mean, That there is a God.

And therefore I ſhould now come to the ſecond way of probation, *viz.* from the viſible inſtances and effects of a Providence, but (you remember) I have already prevented my ſelf herein, by what paſs'd between us in a former Conference, where I ſhew'd, at large, the evident Footſteps of Providence in his managing or over-ruling the ordinary courſe of nature in two remarkable inſtances, *viz.* 1. In the Prophecies and Predictions of things to come, which have been ſo admirably verified in the Event, as muſt argue an All-ſeeing Eye over all the Motions of ſecond Cauſes. And, 2. in the Miracles that have been wrought in the ſeveral Ages of the World, wherein the Divine Majeſty

v. Conf 2. *pag.* 183. *to p.* 201.

jeſty hath apparently interpoſed, and either ſuſpended or over-ruled, hightned or accelerated the Motion and force of Natural Cauſes, and by both together, given proof of his Being, and of his minding the affairs of the World.

I aſſure my ſelf I ſhall not need to repeat that Argument at large, but may truſt your Memory for it; only, if now upon ſo long time of Conſideration, you have any thing material to object on that account, I am ready to make good what I have aſſerted.

Bioph. I muſt needs ſay you deal fairly and ingenuouſly thus far; and now that I recollect the ſumm and drift of that diſcourſe of yours, I have, as I think, this very material thing to ſay againſt it, namely, That we cannot obſerve any ſuch Interpoſitions of Divine Providence as you ſpeak of, now-a-days, but the World is left wholly to the courſe of Natural Cauſes. If you could have appealed either to Miracles or Prophecy in the preſent Age, ſo that a Man might have made his own Eyes witneſſes of matter of fact, then the Argument would have been irrefragable; but foraſmuch as we ſee no ſuch things in the preſent times, why ſhould we be ſo credulous as to believe there ever were? Aſſoil me this difficulty clearly and ſubſtantially, and it will go a great way with me; for I acknowledge (as you obſerve) that if this Argument be found, the influence of it extends

The great Objection againſt Providence is, that there are no Miracles to be ſeen now.

extends farther than the preſent Queſtion, and to be ſure will leave no doubt that there is a God.

Sebaſt. I am very ſenſible of the importance of your Objection, and of the neceſſity that a ſufficient anſwer be made to it; but I do not, in the leaſt, doubt but you will find it in the following Particulars, by that time you have laid them together.

A full Anſwer to the aforeſaid Objection.

Firſt, I ſuppoſe you will grant me that there can be no need of, or reaſon for God's diſplaying himſelf by Miracles or a Spirit of Prophecy in the preſent Age, for the aſſurance of a Providence, if ſo be we may be ſufficiently ſecured that he hath indubitably given thoſe evidences already in former Ages. For he that hath once ſufficient grounds given him to believe ſuch a Point, hath always an Obligation upon him to believe that thing, without repeated Proofs of it. And it is unreaſonable to expect that God Almighty ſhould be bound to exert his Omnipotency, or any way put out of courſe the order of Natural Cauſes, merely for the Gratification of Mens Curioſity or Phancy, but only for the Satisfaction of their Reaſon in ſo important a Point.

Then, Secondly, In the next place I will ſhew you that (bating merely the gratifying of Curioſity and Phancy, as aforeſaid) we may have as credible and ſufficient aſſurance of a Miracle or other extra-

extraordinary paſſage of Providence, which was done many Ages agone, as we could have, if ſuch a thing was to be done in the preſent Age. This will perhaps ſeem a little ſtrange to you at firſt, but your wonder will abate when you conſider theſe two things:

1. That it cannot be expected that God ſhould ſo far comply with the humour of Men, as to work Miracles every day, and in the ſight of every Man. Miracles are a kind of Parenthesis in the ordinary courſe of Nature, or, as it were, a ſhort Digreſſion from the uſual method of things. Now if ſuch Digreſſions ſhould be daily made, it would be, in a manner, a total ſuperſeding of the ordinary courſe of Nature; and ſo inſtead of ſerving the particular turn or humour of ſome Men, the whole Race of Mankind would be deprived of a greater and more remarkable Miracle than all the other put together, namely, that of the ſtable and conſtant courſe of Nature. And ſuch frequent irregularities as muſt follow upon that Conceſſion, would put a very great Temptation upon Men to ſuſpect that there was no conſtant Law and Rule in the Creation, but that Chance carried all before it; which would make an Objection indeed againſt Providence. And yet it is certain that notwithſtanding this horrible miſchief, ſo it muſt be done, if every particular Man muſt have his Eyes witneſſes of Miracles before he

The demand of daily and frequent Miracles is very abſurd.

believes them. For it is plain that if God ſhould vouchſafe one or more Miracles to the preſent Age, it could not be done before every Man: and therefore ſome of them, if they will believe a Providence upon that account, muſt truſt to other Mens Eyes for the grounds of their belief.

And thus we ſee it was in thoſe times and places where Miracles were moſt frequent, as ſuppoſe in the time of our Saviour, thoſe mighty Works which he wrought whilſt he was upon Earth, and even his Reſurrection it ſelf, were not obvious to the Eyes of all Men, but only to ſo many as might render them ſufficiently credible by their Teſtimony; and as for the generality, they muſt content themſelves *to believe without ſeeing*, as he himſelf told them. S. John 20. 29.

Ancient Miracles are as credible as thoſe that are preſent, and in ſome reſpects more certain.

2. If God ſhould ſo far condeſcend to the incredulity of Men, as to permit generally their Eyes and Senſes to be witneſſes of ſuch extraordinary Paſſages of providence as we ſpeak of, it would not have ſuch ſucceſs as you imagine, for there would not want Objections againſt this alſo: ſome would then ſuſpect their very Senſes, or ſay that either their Imaginations were deluded, or elſe it may be all was done by Natural Cauſes, though perhaps they did not well underſtand them, or at leaſt would conclude that which appears to be a Miracle was merely an Accident, and ſo there is no account

count to be ſought or given of it. Thus we know the greateſt Miracles that ever were wrought have been ſhifted off, and eluded even in the times wherein they were done, and by thoſe Men that ſaw them. But now when thoſe things that I make the inſtances of a Providence, (the ancient Miracles I mean) have undergone the Teſt of Time, and been canvaſſed and diſcuſſed in ſeveral Ages, and yet no flaw is found in them: in this caſe, I ſay, we have more full ground for our belief, than if the things had been freſh before our Eyes: for that ſame incredulous humour which now objects againſt the credit of things, becauſe they were done long ago, would find out as good a trick to put upon a preſent Miracle (if it was to be had,) namely, ſuch a Man would ſay (and with more colour of reaſon,) that though I cannot detect the Cheat of this for the preſent, yet time may diſcover it, which cannot be ſaid in the other caſe.

The preſent times not deſtitute of marks of Providence.

But, Thirdly and laſtly, I add to all aforeſaid, That though it is true, that all Ages are not alike illuſtrated with ſuch prodigious Acts of Providence as are properly and ſtrictly called Miracles, yet there is no time of the World wherein there are not very plainly the Prints of Divinity, and evidences of a Providence continually preſiding over the World, if Men do not humourſomly deſpiſe them (for want of the pompous Circum-

ſtances of Miracles) or ſtupidly overlook them, becauſe of their commonneſs and frequency; ſuch as (as for example) the preſerving the ſeveral ſpecies of things in the World, that amongſt that vaſt multitude of the kinds of Birds, or Inſects, *&c.* and their ſeveral enmities to one another, and the many accidents all of them are expoſed to, there ſhould notwithſtanding in ſo long a tract of time, not be any one kind of them loſt or extinguiſhed.

That the Holy Scriptures and Chriſtian Religion ſhould be upheld in ſpight of the Combination of Wit and Ignorance, Power and Malice againſt them.

That Civil Government ſhould be preſerved againſt all the Intereſts of reſolvedly wicked Men, and againſt all the brutiſh violence of the inraged *Mobile*.

Beſides the remarkable Infatuation of the Counſels, diſcovering the Plots, and defeating the Deſigns of Crafty and Atheiſtical Politicians: The frequent terrours upon the Conſciences, and damps upon the Spirits of the moſt deſperate and flagitious Men, and the aſſiſting, animating and comforting the Hearts of good Men in their greateſt Agonies and moſt difficult undertakings. Some of theſe things I mentioned before in our former Conference, and all of them are ſuch as happen in every Age, and are never the leſs evidences of Providence for being ordinary.

Indeed

Indeed it may and doth fall out that now and then things happen quite otherwiſe, as that Conſpiracies of wicked Men are ſucceſsful, *&c.* and God Almighty ſeems to order it ſo on purpoſe, becauſe he will not be traced in his Methods, and becauſe he will leave ſome trials of Mens willingneſs to believe in him and depend upon him; but the other courſe is ſo uſual, and things often fall out ſo patly that way, that it muſt be extreme humourouſneſs to deny a Providence in them.

But, beſides all theſe, there is one thing more comes now to my mind, which is indeed beyond all the forementioned, and ſeems to be ſet up on purpoſe by Divine Providence as a ſtanding Monument of it ſelf to all Ages, and that is the preſent Condition of the *Jews*.

They were once a great and flouriſhing Kingdom, and fortunate beyond all example; but now from the time that they grew incurably wicked and rebellious againſt the God that had ſo ſignally bleſs'd them, and had to all their other impieties crucified the Saviour of the World; They have now (I ſay) for the ſpace of ſixteen or ſeventeen hundred of Years, been *like the Field which God hath curſed*, and been the moſt prodigious inſtance of unhappineſs that ever was in the World. Foraſmuch as though they are ſtill vaſtly numerous, a cunning, crafty and pro-

jecting ſort of People, yet they are every where ſcattered through all Nations, but every where under marks of Infamy, and no where able to become a People ſo as to live under Laws, and a Government of their own: notwithſtanding all which, and which is the wonder of all, they keep up their Stock and Pedigree with the greateſt exactneſs imaginable, as if God intended (as certainly he did) by all this to ſet them forth as a lively inſtance both of his juſt Providence, and of the truth of the Spirit of Prophecy in the Holy Scriptures. And now this, together with the foregoing inſtances, I think, affords ſufficient evidence that God doth not now neglect the World, and leave all to run in the Road of Natural Cauſes, but even in theſe latter Ages as well as formerly gives ſome ſignal ſtrokes of an over-ruling hand: which was the thing to be proved. And thus the two firſt Principles of Religion are ſecured. What think you, *Biophilus*? deal plainly, and if you have any thing further to ſay to the contrary, propound it.

Bioph. Truly I have nothing very material to ſay farther.

Sebaſt. Then God be thanked we have now gained two feet for Religion to ſtand upon; namely, we have a God to whom it is due, and we have an Obligation from the Conſideration of his Providence, to make all the World careful and obſervant

of

of him, at leaſt ſo far as any part of the Creation is capable of ſuch a duty.

Bioph. Very right, but I remember you ſaid, That to lay the Foundation of Religion effectually, there muſt be conſideration alſo of the ſubjects of it: and it muſt appear in particular, that Mankind is under a capacity of the aforeſaid Obligation, and of paying and performing this duty towards the Divine Majeſty accordingly. Now as for this, though I foreſee no difficulty in the caſe, yet however, I pray, expreſs your ſelf a little more fully about it, leſt I ſhould be under any miſtake.

The third Principle of Religion, that Man is a Subject capable of it.

Sebaſt. The bottom of this third Point is no more but this: To make Mankind a Subject capable of the Obligations of Religion, theſe three things are requiſite:

1. That he be able in ſome meaſure to judge what carriage from himſelf is fit and decent towards God.

2. That he be a free Agent, and have it in his choice and power to determine himſelf towards the performance of what he underſtands to be fit and decent, or towards the contrary if he will.

3. That he be able to reflect upon what he hath done, ſo as to accuſe and condemn, or to acquit and juſtifie himſelf accordingly as his Actions and Carriage towards the Deity have been agreeable or diſagreeable to the judgment aforeſaid.

The firſt of theſe Powers and Capa-

cities is commonly called *Underſtanding*; the ſecond, *Will* or *Freedom of choice*; and the third is known by the name of *Conſcience*.

Without the firſt of theſe, namely, if Mankind had not *Underſtanding* to diſcern the difference of things, and ſome rule within him whereby to judge of moral Good and Evil, he would be lawleſs and brutiſh, having no other meaſures to go by than his Paſſions and Senſes.

Without the ſecond, namely, If he had not *Freedom of Will* to determine himſelf towards Good and Evil, as he pleaſed, he muſt then be under a fatal neceſſity of doing whatſoever he ſhould happen to do: and then as he could give no proof of his Temper and Inclination, ſo there could be no ſuch thing as acceptableneſs to God when he did well, nor blameableneſs when he did otherwiſe; becauſe there could be no ſuch things as Vertue or Vice in his caſe: and conſequently no more room for either rewards or puniſhments, than there is in the motion of Plants or Stones, or any other the moſt inſenſible things.

Without the third and laſt, *viz.* If Mankind had not ſuch a faculty in him as we call *Conſcience*, ſo as to reflect upon his own Actions and Carriage, and by virtue of which he either applauds and juſtifies himſelf when he hath obeyed the beſt reaſon of his mind, or upbraids and

and ſcourges himſelf whenſoever he hath done otherwiſe, he could neither have any ſpur to Vertue, nor check upon Vice, and conſequently would have no regard what uſe he made of his liberty.

But by all theſe together (if they appear to be inherent in Humane Nature) Mankind is fully qualified for the Obligations of Religion.

Now looking over the World as far as we can, we find no Creature that we converſe with, to be indowed with theſe faculties but our ſelves, and then looking into our ſelves we find by undeniable experience that we have every one of the aforeſaid capacities in our Nature: and hence I conclude that Man, and Man only of all Creatures (in the viſible World) is the Subject of Religion. And this I called the third Fundamental Principle of Religion; not that I take it to be properly and ſtrictly ſo, but in regard it is manifeſt by what hath been ſaid, that there can be no ſure ground for Religion without it.

And thus, I think, I have fully anſwered your demand concerning the ground-work of Religion, and laid out a Foundation both large enough and ſtrong enough to bear the whole Structure. And now I hope you will ſee no cauſe to ſuſpect it to be a mere melancholy Fancy, or politick Stratagem, the reſult of Education, or effect of Weakneſs and Fear, but the moſt manly and rational thing that

that any Man can concern himſelf about.

Bioph. I confeſs, you have done as you ſay, *Sebaſtian*, and I thank you heartily for it; it is true, I could ſtill have found out ſomething or other to have replied, but I promiſed you I would not uſe mere ſubterfuges and diſingenuous ſhifts, and I find without them there is nothing to be ſaid farther in the caſe; ſo that in plain *Engliſh* I muſt profeſs I cannot tell whether more to admire, you or my ſelf, pardon the Expreſſion; I mean, whether more to be aſhamed of my own ſtupidity, that have thus long laugh'd in my ſleeve at Religion, or your Prudence that firſt hedg'd me in with your Preliminary Demands, that my Mind could not rove from the Point, and then purſued me with cloſe Arguments, that I have no way to eſcape. In ſhort, I am convinced ſo far, that Religion is a thing diligently to be heeded, and carefully inquired into; I pray therefore, leave me not in the Briars you have brought me into, but as you have diſcovered to me the Foundations, ſo tell me what Superſtructions muſt be made upon them. In the firſt place, what do you mean by Religion?

A general Deſcription of Religion.

Sebaſt. *By Religion in general I underſtand nothing elſe but a ſerious Study to know God, together with a careful endeavour to pleaſe him, and procure his favour.* This is that which not only the ſeveral

Sects

Sects of Christians mean by Religion, but is that which all Men of Sense, and even the better sort of Pagans themselves agree in.

Bioph. By the easiness of your Expression, and the few words you have made use of in this Description, one would think the business it self was more ease than I doubt I shall find it to be: but, I pray, however consider me as an Idiot and a Stranger to this matter, and condescend to explain your self more particularly; and first give me leave to ask you what you mean by the knowing of God? Do you intend any thing more than the acknowledgment that there is a God?

Sebast. Yes, *Biophilus*, I here understand a great deal more by the knowing of God, than I did in all our former Discourse whilst we were only laying the Foundations of Religion; there indeed no more was required than to acknowledge his Being, and that because (as I then shew'd you) therein lies the first reason of such a thing as we call Religion. For there is nothing to oblige a Man to have any regard to himself, nor to make any difference of his Actions, till he acknowledge such a Being as hath a Sovereignty over him, and to whom he is accountable for his Carriage. But now when that is resolved of, then there arises a twofold occasion of studying farther to know the God which he acknowledges to be;

The necessity of studying to know the Divine Nature.

Namely,

Namely, Firſt, becauſe it cannot but appear a point of great decency and regard towards this acknowledged Sovereign of the World, that we employ our minds, the nobleſt powers we have, in the ſtudy and contemplation of him; and indeed to do otherwiſe is not only unmanly, but an Argument of ſuch contempt as is not conſiſtent with the real perſwaſion of ſuch a Being as God.

Again, Secondly, Foraſmuch as by the bare acknowledgment that there is a God, we ſee reaſon to make a difference of things, and to have a care of our Actions with reſpect to him; ſo now when we are come to that, it will farther concern us in particular to have ſome rule and meaſure to govern our ſelves by, and whereby to make a Diſtinction of good and evil, to the end that we may pleaſe him in what we do: and that is only attainable by ſerious ſtudy of the Divine Nature, Attributes and ſuch Declarations of his Mind and Will as he hath made.

For you muſt know that it is not every thing whatſoever we may fanſie, that will pleaſe him. For then all Religions would be alike true and ſafe, and none but Atheiſts and Hypocrites could miſcarry. But it is certain God hath a mind of his own, and that Devotion or Obſervance only pleaſes him which is agreeable to him; all other is fooliſh Superſtition, and at beſt but loſt labour.

Bioph. But I hope, after all, you do not intend to repreſent the Deity as a touchy and humourſome kind of Being: for then conſequently, Religion muſt needs be the moſt anxious thing in the World, and far from what you have hitherto made me believe it was.

Sebaſt. God forbid, *Biophilus*, that ſuch a thought of the Divine Majeſty ſhould enter into any Man's Heart, or that I ſhould be guilty of miſrepreſenting Religion at that rate. As for God himſelf, he is certainly nothing elſe but wiſe and great Goodneſs, too great to be fondly taken with little things, and too wiſe and good to be offended with little things; and therefore Religion cannot conſiſt in Niceties and Punctilio's, as if it was the ſervile flattery of a Tyrant, and not the ingenuous ſervice of loyal Subjects to a brave and generous Prince; notwithſtanding, as I ſaid before, he hath a Mind and Will of his own, and expects that ſhould be complied with, if we intend to procure his favour.

The neceſſity of ſtudying to know the Divine Will as well as his Nature.

Bioph. But is it not enough that a Man live well and vertuouſly, and ſerve God devoutly? Will not that pleaſe and propitiate him to us?

Sebaſt. Yes doubtleſs it will, but ſtill you muſt have a rule and ſtandard for all that; otherwiſe there will be no real difference of Vertue and Vice, nor no diſtinction between Superſtition and Devotion.

Bioph.

Bioph. Now am I in a Wilderneſs, when I thought my ſelf even at *Canaan.*

Sebaſt. Why, what's the matter, *Biophilus*? Could you think that mere good meaning, or any kind of blind Devotion would ſerve the turn? or that Man might preſcribe to his Maker what he ſhould be pleas'd withal?

Bioph. The matter is plainly this, *Sebaſtian*: I perceive that if a Man have a mind to be Religious, he ſhall be at a loſs which way to take, and what to do; his own Conſcience, you ſay, is not a ſufficient Guide for him, becauſe that may be miſtaken, and therefore he muſt have a rule; well, to come by this rule; he muſt (ſay you) ſtudy to know God's Nature, and that is not enough, but God hath a Mind and Will of his own, and that muſt be known too; and that's not all neither, for he may alter his mind, and then we are at a worſe loſs than ever: if therefore this be the ſtate of the caſe, it is to no purpoſe to think or talk farther of this buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Come, cheer up Man, there is no danger of all this you dream of, this ſeeming difficulty will preſently clear up, by that time I have told you, that God's Mind and Nature are ſo entirely the ſame, that whatſoever is agreeable to his Nature cannot be contradicted by any Act of his will; and whatſoever is the expreſs of his will, is alſo a true Copy of his Nature

Nature (at leaſt in the general.) And therefore if we perfectly underſtood the Divine Nature, there would be no need that he ſhould make any Declaration of his Will; for then it would be the only inſtance of Religion to imitate and endeavour to reſemble him, which is the trueſt honour that can be done to him, and conſequently could not fail to pleaſe him. But now foraſmuch as we neither do nor can perfectly underſtand his Nature, becauſe it is too great and too ſublime for us to take a full view of it, therefore it is that we ſtand in need of the Declaration of his Will for our guide in his ſervice.

The meaſures of Devotion are partly the Divine Nature, and partly his Will.

Bioph. If this be ſo (as it ſeems reaſonable enough) then why did you ſpeak of his Nature in this caſe, ſeeing the buſineſs lies in the ſtudying of the Divine Will; at leaſt, if there be any ſuch thing as a Declaration of it which may be come at?

Sebaſt. The reaſon of my making mention both of the Divine Nature and the Divine Will to you in this caſe, will become as evident to you as any thing we have diſcourſed of, by that time you have conſidered theſe two things:

Firſt, That foraſmuch as natural light (which is the common Principle of Mankind) can make ſome diſcovery of the Nature of God to us, but little or nothing of his Will; therefore it is neceſſary, that ſuch as have not Divine Revelation, ſhould by the uſe of Reaſon ſtu-

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dy the Divine Nature for their guidance in the mean time.

Again, ſecondly, It is very conſiderable, that even thoſe that live under the advantage of Divine Revelation, may be impoſed upon by counterfeit Oracles, and ſuch as falſly pretend to be diſcoverers of the Will of God, if they do not well ſtudy the Divine Nature, by the knowledge of which they may be able to detect ſuch Frauds and Impoſtures; for if a Doctrine be broached in the World, that is contrary to the natural and reaſonable Notions Men have of God, although ſuch Doctrine pretend never ſo much to Divinity; nay, if it ſhould ſeem to have the ſame miraculous Atteſtation to it that the Goſpel it ſelf hath, we may and ought to reject it upon this account, that we are ſure nothing can come from God which contradicts himſelf, nor can there be any Declaration of his Will which is contrary to the known meaſures of his Nature: and therefore the Nature of God as well as the Will of God, is to be ſtudied and attended to as our Rule in this great affair of Religion.

See Deuteronomy 13. 1,2,3, &c.

Bioph. Now I think I underſtand you thus far; and if I be not miſtaken, then I have two great things ſtill to ask your aſſiſtance in: 1. That you will help me to underſtand the Divine Nature. 2. That you will direct me how I may come to the

the knowledge of his Will, by which two together I find I muſt be enabled both to pleaſe him and procure his favour: and, firſt, I pray explain the Nature of God to me.

Sebaſt. I know you are a wiſer Man than to expect from me that I ſhould give you a perfect Definition of the Divine Majeſty; for by what hath been ſaid already, you cannot but be ſenſible of the vanity and impoſſibility of ſuch an attempt on my part, and conſequently of the abſurdity of ſuch a demand on yours: but if your deſire be (as I ſuppoſe it is) that I ſhould repreſent God to you under ſuch Expreſſions as that we may underſtand one another what we mean when we ſpeak of him, and alſo may ſufficiently diſtinguiſh him from all other Beings, then I doubt not to give you ſatisfaction.

Bioph. I ask no more but what you promiſe, ſaving that I expect alſo that your Deſcription of him ſhould not only render him a fit Object of Religion, but alſo in ſome meaſure a Rule for it too, according to what you laſt diſcourſed. *A Deſcription of the Divine Nature.*

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, and why may not theſe few words ſatisfie you, *viz. God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit.*

Bioph. Ah, *Sebaſtian*! The Words are few indeed, but they are ſuch as will put you to the expence of a great many more before I ſhall underſtand them;

every word is a Myſtery, *Spirit*, *Eternal*, *Infinite*.

Sebaſt. Be of good courage, *Biophilus*, for though I foretold you we ſhould never be able fully to comprehend the Divine Majeſty, yet with a little Patience and Attention you ſhall find thoſe Phraſes very intelligible, and neither to be Nonſenſe or Gibberiſh, nor Cramp-words to conceal a conceited Ignorance under, as your old Friends the Epicureans are wont to call them.

Bioph. I confeſs you have not diſappointed me hitherto, and therefore I will not deſpair, nor do I intend any longer to diſpute with you, but to learn of you; therefore, I pray, in the firſt place, tell me plainly and intelligibly what a Spirit is, and what you mean when you ſay, God is a *Spirit*?

The word [Spirit] *explained, and the nature of the thing.*

Sebaſt. You may remember, that what you now demand was the Subject of part of our former Conference, wherein I indeavoured to ſettle the Notion of a Spirit, and not only to convince you of the neceſſity of acknowledging ſuch a kind of Being, but alſo to poſſeſs you with ſome apprehenſions of the nature of it: and therefore, I hope, I ſhall not need to go over that again. But now, when I call God a Spirit, I mean neither more nor leſs than this, namely, That *he is an underſtanding, free and powerful Subſtance, which yet is not viſible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senſes:* this, I take

V. Conf. 2. *from page* 176. *to pag.* 179.

take it, is the proper notion of a Spirit.

In the firſt place, I call a Spirit a *Subſtance*, that you may be ſure I mean not a Spectre or Fantom (as your Friends uſe to ſuſpect) but ſomething which is as real as Matter or Body it ſelf.

And yet, in the ſecond place, to diſtinguiſh it from Matter or bodily Subſtance, I ſay, it is *not viſible*, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senſes, as that other kind of Subſtance doth, or at leaſt is ſuppoſed to do.

And then, in the laſt place, to ſhew you that this is no contradiction, and to deliver you from the prejudice of Senſe, I repreſent to you the *Effects and Operations* of a Spirit, which are ſuch as muſt needs argue it to be a Subſtance, and an excellent one too; namely, that it hath power to move the matter wherein it reſides, and alſo hath Underſtanding and Will or Choice, which Matter is incapable of.

So that look what that thing which we call a Soul is in our ſelves, that doth this notion of Spirit imply God to be to the whole World; namely, as by *that* we move our Bodies, and underſtand a reaſon for, and can give check to our own motion, ſo doth God preſide over the World.

Bioph. I acknowledge you have delivered a conſiſtent notion of ſuch a thing as a Spirit, and therefore I ſee no impoſſibility that there ſhould be ſuch a

thing. But how doth it appear that there is really and actually ſuch a thing as a Spirit, or that if there be a God, he muſt needs be a Spirit?

Sebaſt. The reaſon is very plain by what hath been ſaid already, when I proved to you the exiſtence of a God. For there it was confeſſed on both hands, that ſomething muſt be Eternal, or nothing could have been at all; and then I demonſtrated that Matter could not be that Eternal Being, therefore it muſt be Spirit or nothing that gave Beginning to Things, and conſequently this thing Spirit is not only a conſiſtent Notion, but a neceſſary Reality, and God is that Spirit.

Beſides, to convince you of this the more effectually, let me mind you of what, I think, I have heretofore obſerved, *viz.* That we find in our ſelves ſomething which not only moves and acts our Bodies, but alſo ſometimes bears hard againſt them, croſſes and controls them in their Intereſts and Inclinations. Now ſurely that which doth ſo, muſt needs be ſomething of an higher and different nature from them, and is no other than that kind of Spiritual Being which we call a Soul; and ſo you have another and more obvious Evidence of the actual exiſtence of a Spiritual Subſtance.

The uſefulneſs of acknowledging God to be a ſpiritual Subſtance.

Bioph. I apprehend you, but, I pray, excuſe me one Queſtion more on this Point, and that is, What is the importance of this to Religion? Or of what influence

influence will the acknowledgment of God to be a Spirit have upon the ruling and directing a Man in his Devotions towards him?

Sebaſt. The belief that God is a Spirit is of very great conſequence to Religion upon ſeveral accounts.

Partly as it obliges us to be very ſincere, hearty and inward in all our Devotions to him, and not think to put him off with Out-ſides and Complements: for ſeeing *he is a Spirit, he will be worſhipped in Spirit and Truth.* John 4.24.

Partly alſo as it renders it evident to us, that neither the ſound of Words, nor any peculiar Poſture, Ceremony, or other ſuch like childiſh Trifles can of themſelves be acceptable to him who is a great and a wiſe Spirit, no nor yet the Fat of Beaſts, nor the Odours of ſweet Incenſe, nor Gold, nor Silver, nor any of thoſe things that are admired amongſt Men; but leaſt of all ſuch ſenſual and laſcivious Rites as were in uſe amongſt the Pagans: for as none of the former can be ſuitable Oblations to ſuch a pure Being; ſo it is certain thoſe laſt named can only befit an impure Spirit, ſuch an one as the Devil is.

But principally, as it convinces us of the Vanity and Impiety of making Images of God, or of thinking to do honour to him by the uſe of them in his Worſhip, ſince he being a Spiritual Subſtance can by no means be repreſented

by them, but muſt needs be debaſed and rendred much meaner to our thoughts than he is by ſuch Repreſentations; and therefore we find, that not only the Holy Scripture in the Books both of the Old and New Teſtament, utterly condemns ſuch uſages as Idolatrous and abominable to him; but we may alſo obſerve that amongſt the Pagans themſelves, all thoſe who arrived at this notion, that God was a Spirit, rejected Image-Worſhip, and thought that of the Mind and Spirit to be only acceptable to him.

To all which add, That the belief of the Spiritual Nature of God enables us more eaſily to conceive of the greatneſs of his Power, and that it is eaſie to him to mind and govern the World without trouble or wearineſs to himſelf, and with the greater advantage to us. For it is not imaginable that a perfectly immaterial Subſtance ſhould be ſenſible of any laſſitude or decay; and thus the belief of God's being a Spirit, confirms our truſt in his Divine Providence which is the prime Spring and Motive of Devotion.

Bioph. I am abundantly ſatisfied that God is a Spirit, and that he ought to be ſo acknowledged. Now proceed, in the next place, to tell me what you mean when you ſay he is *Eternal.*

Of God's Eternity,

Sebaſt. By God's being an Eternal Spirit, I mean, that as he had no Beginning,

ginning, ſo he can have no end of his Being, and that becauſe (as I ſhewed you) he is neceſſarily, or could not but be; for we agreed even now that ſuch an excellency of Being muſt be allowed to ſomething or other, or elſe nothing could have been at all, and I made it plain, that it could not be attributed to the World, or any part of it, and therefore muſt be due to God. *and the neceſſity of acknowledging it.*

Bioph. I ſee I might have ſaved you the trouble of that Queſtion, yet you will excuſe it, ſince it leads me to another, which I cannot ſo well reſolve without your help, *viz.* of what moment is it to Religion whether God be acknowledged to be Eternal or not?

Sebaſt. Oh! Of very great moment; for, in the firſt place, this being acknowledged, we are thereby aſſured that all the inferiour Gods of the Gentiles, or whatſoever were either ſuppoſed to be born, or to have a beginning, or to die, or decline in Power and Divinity, could not be Gods, but the Idols of fooliſh and deluded Men; and at the ſame time we are as certain that the true God can neither do, nor be capable of any hurt or detriment, no nor of any change, but ever remains immutably the ſame. For whatſoever is liable to change, may alſo ceaſe to be.

Again, Upon the Conſideration of God's Eternity depends a great Obli-

gation to Religion, foraſmuch as by this means he hath it always in his power to reward or puniſh Men according to their Demerit, wherein conſiſts a great Secret of his Providence, namely, the reaſon of his Patience and Long-ſuffering, that he doth not preſently execute vengeance upon wicked Men, nor, on the other ſide, immediately deliver good Men out of the troubles and injuries they meet with in this World, becauſe he hath it always in his power to do it, and if he do it not in this World, will be ſure to do it in the next.

To both which may be added, That although the Notion of Eternity of time to come be a great deep into which we cannot look without Giddineſs and Diſturbance, yet we may be certain there is ſuch a thing, becauſe we are ſure that God cannot ceaſe to be, no more than he began to be; and therefore the ſolicitude which is in Men about what is to come after their deaths, is not the effect of timidity and weakneſs, (as you ſometime ſuſpected) but a rational and well grounded Prudence, as I then told you.

Bioph. But yet there is one very difficult thing remains to be explained, namely, what do you mean when you ſay God is an *Infinite* Spirit?

God's Infinity explained.

Sebaſt. By that I mean, that whereas all other Beings (as well Spiritual as Material) which are not neceſſarily, or which might not have been, muſt conſequent-

ſequently, whenſoever they come into Being, depend upon him, who hath Being in himſelf, and ſo be limited and circumſcribed by him; that is, they can have but only ſuch a certain Portion of Power, Life and Underſtanding as he hath allotted them: on the contrary, he that was before all things, and the cauſe of all things, and who could not but be, muſt needs be unlimited in all kind of Perfections, foraſmuch as there was nothing before him to limit him, nothing equal to him to rival him, nothing after him to intrench upon him, and conſequently all conceivable Perfection muſt be eſſentially in him; that is, he muſt be moſt powerful, moſt wiſe, moſt juſt and moſt good, *&c.* *plained, and the uſe of believing it.*

Bioph. I think I need not ask you of what importance this laſt point is to Religion, for (as dull as I am) I am aware that this Attribute of the Deity renders him the Object of our Admiration, Fear, Truſt, and all other inſtances of Devotion.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Biophilus*, and beſides, by vertue of this infinity he can be preſent to all places, to take notice of all Paſſages, he can eaſily accompliſh whatſoever he promiſes or threatens; he can be ſtraitned in nothing, nor need any thing, having all things in himſelf, and conſequently of that, it is impoſſible to conceive of him as a ſtingy, narrow-hearted Being that can envy

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or malign his Creatures, but contrariwiſe, he muſt be unſpeakably good, and take delight in nothing more than in communicating of his own fulneſs to them.

But that which I would eſpecially remark, is this, That a being infinite in Goodneſs, Wiſdom, *&c.* as aforeſaid, can never be the Author of abſurd, or harſh and impoſſible Laws; for any ſuch would be a Contradiction to the aforenamed Perfections of his Nature: and therefore as we have upon this account great Obligations to ſerve him chearfully; ſo we may aſſure our ſelves that whatſoever pretends to be a Divine Law, and can be made appear to be inhumanely rigorous, or intolerably difficult to be obſerved, is either no Law of his, or at the leaſt it is not rightly interpreted.

And thus, I hope, I have, in ſome meaſure, explained to you the Nature of God, and alſo led you to obſerve the main ſtrokes of Piety, or the Laws of natural Religion towards him, deducible from thoſe Principles: and you your ſelf by attentive Conſideration, may be able to deduce many others of like nature. What other ſervice do you now command me?

Bioph. After hearty thanks, good *Sebaſtian*, for the mild and candid treatment you have given me all along, which together with that clearneſs of reaſon

reaſon which ſhines out in your Diſcourſe, have made me perfectly yours. I would in the next place requeſt of you (if I be not too importunately troubleſome) that you will in like manner diſcourſe to me of the Divine Will, as you have done of his Nature; that ſo I may be more fully inſtructed in this great buſineſs.

Sebaſt. I ſhall never think it troubleſome, or unſeaſonable to ſerve you in ſuch an affair as this; but, *Biophilus*, if we ſhould go no farther, and that I had nothing to ſay concerning Divine Revelation, yet you ſee we have enough already to render Religion not only worthy of a Prudent Man's care, but to be the moſt reaſonable and neceſſary thing in the whole World: ſo that Atheiſm with all its boaſts of Wit and extraordinary Sagacity, and Scepticiſm too with all its Caution and Reſervedneſs, are quite beaten out of the Field.

Bioph. I acknowledge it, good *Sebaſtian*, with Glory to God, and Shame enough to my ſelf——

Sebaſt. God be thanked for this gentle Thaw, and the proſpect we have of a fruitful Seaſon after the cold Weather.

Bioph I obſerve no change in the Air; but however, good *Sebaſtian*, let not the thoughts of that divert you from what we were upon.

Sebaſt. Never fear it, Sir, I am mind-

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full of you, and glad to ſee you ſo earneſtly inquiſitive after that you was ſo cold towards, and ſo incurious of heretofore. But what was you about to ſay?

Concerning the knowledge of the Divine Will.

Bioph. I remember you ſaid that humane reaſon was too ſhort to be a Standard for God Almighty, and that if it was poſſible for us perfectly to underſtand the Divine Nature (which we cannot) yet ſince he is a free Agent, and hath a mind of his own, and will not be preſcribed to by us, it is neceſſary in order to the pleaſing and propitiating him towards our ſelves, that we ſhould ſome way or other be more particularly inſtructed concerning his Will and Pleaſure: now therefore my deſire is (if it be poſſible) to be aſcertained of the Divine Will, that I may know how to carry my ſelf agreeably thereunto.

Sebaſt. It is a worthy Reſolution of yours, and a very noble inquiry that hath taken riſe from thence, and let me add, it is ſuch an inquiry as you may juſtly expect Satisfaction in: for ſince natural reaſon and induſtry cannot give us ſufficient light in the caſe, it is not conſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs to leave Men deſtitute of ſome certain way of Information, what he requires and expects from them: And that it is poſſible for God to ſupply that defect of our underſtanding, there can be no doubt,

doubt, ſince it cannot be imagined that Almighty Power and Wiſdom ſhould ever want means to expreſs his Senſe to the Sons of Men, or to aſſure them that ſuch is indeed his Mind without all danger of Impoſture or Deluſion.

Bioph. But what I now underſtand of the Divine Nature, I cannot but grant it very poſſible for God to do ſo; and I inſiſt upon the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs that ſome ſuch thing ſhould be done: but I inquire where is it done, and how may a Man have recourſe to it?

Sebaſt. Firſt let me ask you what ways are there imaginable that might give you or any other Man Satisfaction in this caſe? and what are thoſe you could think fit for God to make uſe of to this purpoſe?

Several ways of Divine Revelation.

Bioph. I could think of ſeveral ways whereby God might, if he pleaſe, make known his Mind to Men; namely, I doubt not but he can, if he will, ſpeak from Heaven in an audible Voice, ſo that we ſhall hear him as we hear one another; or if he thought good to condeſcend ſo far, he could perſonally appear in the World, and inſtruct Men in what he requires of them; or again, he could ſingly apply himſelf to particular Perſons, and by ſome ſecret Operations of his, inſtil his Mind into their Hearts; or, to name no more, he could guide the thoughts and hands of ſome certain Men, whilſt they committed his Will to Writing, which

which ſhould be a Record and Digeſt of the Divine Laws to all Ages of the World.

Sebaſt. Very good: Then I hope it will abundantly ſatisfie you, if I ſhew you that God hath not only made uſe of ſome one or other of theſe ways you mention, but hath by all and every one of them notified his pleaſure at ſome time or other to the Sons of Men.

As for inſtance, In the firſt Ages of the World, before there were any Divine Laws ſettled for the conduct of Mens Lives, it was not unuſual with the Divine Majeſty to give particular Intimations of his Mind, eſpecially in ſuch caſes as the uſe of natural Reaſon could not extend to; and thoſe that were extraordinary good Men, had very frequent experience of this in thoſe ancient times, and even the better ſort of Heathens were not deſtitute of ſuch ſpecial diſcoveries of God's Will (amongſt other occaſions to ſupply the defects of Humane Reaſon in Divine Things) and there is nothing more known and acknowledged amongſt them than this.

And then it is alſo certain, that though God as a Spirit hath properly no Voice of his own, yet he hath ſeveral times framed a Voice, and cauſed it to be heard from Heaven as his, the famous inſtance whereof was at the giving of Laws to the Jewiſh Nation from Mount *Sinai*; nor have later times (no not amongſt the Pagans them-

themſelves) been altogether left without ſuch prodigious diſcoveries of the Divine Will, unleſs we call in Queſtion the credit of all their Writings.

But for God's condeſcending to come himſelf into the World, and to inſtruct Men in ſuch things as are agreeable to his Will, this was moſt gloriouſly verified in the Converſation of our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus in Humane Nature upon Earth, who had all the atteſtations to his Divinity that could be deſired, both in the Wonders of his Birth, the Miracles of his Life, and the Glories of his Reſurrection, but eſpecially in the frequent and humble Miniſtry of Angels to him as occaſion ſerved. And he familiarly and fully interpreted the Mind of God to Men; and the more to awaken the Attention of Mankind to him, a Voice from Heaven alſo attended his entrance on this Office. *Matt.* 3. 17.

And then in the laſt place, for God's declaring his Mind to us by the Miniſtry of Men, this he hath abundantly done in the Books of Holy Scripture, which as they were dictated by himſelf to thoſe Holy Men that compoſed them, ſo they have been carefully preſerved by his ſpecial Providence from the changes and corruption that all Humane things are liable to, that ſo they might convey his Pleaſure to all Perſons, Climates and Ages of the World.

Bioph. But do you mean that a Man may

may conſult which of theſe Oracles, and when he pleaſes, for a Reſolution in any matter of difficulty that occurs in the buſineſs of Religion.

Sebaſt. No indeed, *Biophilus*, that you muſt not expect, but muſt content your ſelf only with the laſt of the four, namely, the Holy Scripture, that is the ſtanding and *lively Oracle of God*, and *more ſure than a Voice from Heaven.*

Heb. 5. 12. 2 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

Bioph. But may I not ask, why might not ſome of thoſe other Declarations of the Divine Mind have been continued as well as that of the Scripture, eſpecially either a Voice from Heaven, or ſome immediate impreſs of God Almighty upon the Minds of Men, if it had been but for the Atteſtation to, and fuller Confirmation of the Bible, and the written way of Divine Revelation?

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, we muſt not ask God a reaſon of that, but be thankful to him for what he hath afforded us, eſpecially ſince that is as much as is neceſſary for our guidance: for thoſe that *hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they hear if one roſe from the Dead*, much leſs if they heard a Voice from Heaven.

Luke 16 31.

The reaſon of the ſurceaſe of Voices from Heaven and ſpecial Oracles.

Nevertheleſs I muſt tell you, I do not think it altogether impoſſible to give a modeſt Man more particular Satisfaction in this caſe, for there were apparently ſpecial reaſons why God ſhould make ſuch ſpecial and prodigious diſcoveries of

of himſelf in former times as he doth not make now-a-days, namely, becauſe for a good part of the Age of the World there was no written Law, and ſo God muſt apply himſelf to Men in ſome extraordinary way, or they would have had no Inſtruction in his Will at all. And then after that the Law was given by Voice from Heaven on Mount *Sinai*, and written on Tables of Stone, it was in it ſelf ſo imperfect a draught of the Divine Mind, and for the moſt part ſo accommodated to the weakneſs of that People, and to the infancy of the World, that it would have been hard to have kept a Man of any Sagacity in a conſtant belief of it as coming from God, if he had not continually and from time to time made prodigious Atteſtations to it: But now eſpecially ſince our Saviour came into the World, and we have the Books of the New Teſtament, as well as of the Old, there is ſo full a Declaration of the Divine Mind, and that not in Types and Figures neither, but in ſo plain a way, and with ſo much agreeableneſs of the things diſcovered to the reaſon of Mankind; that there is no need of any ſecondary Atteſtation, nor any thing more than that it appears that thoſe Writings were indited by God.

Beſides, it is to be conſidered that the way of giving anſwer by a Voice from Heaven, unleſs it had been grant-

ed to every Man (and then it must have been done almost every day and hour, and in every part of the World also) could not have given better satisfaction to the generality of Men (I mean to such as were not Ear-witnesses of such a Voice) than this way of Scripture doth: for without infinite and continual Miracles, it must have been their lot and duty to believe without hearing such a Voice.

And for that other way of *secret intimation of God's* Mind to the Minds of Men by a private and particular Oracle, it is plain that it could go no farther than to satisfie that particular Person to whom such answer was given; and therefore was only fit to be made use of in extraordinary cases, and upon some extraordinary Persons, and even then there was need of some Miracle to attend such intimations, in order to the securing the Minds of such Men from the delusions of the Devil, or their own Fancies: and when that was done, this discovery could go no farther than the Person to whom it was particularly made; for it *was like the white stone which no man knew but he that received it*: The rest of Mankind could have no other advantage by it, nor be better secured of the Oracle, than we are of what we learn by the Holy Scripture, no nor so well neither, as you will see by and by, if you please.

Rev. 2 17.

Bioph.

Bioph. With all my Heart, for that is the very point I desire to be resolved in; but in order thereto, first, let me intreat you to explain what you mean by this way of Divine Legislation, or this way of delivering the Will of God by the Writings of the Holy Scripture.

Sebast. The way is this: Divine Wisdom resolving to give a standing Law and Guide to Mankind, in the first place, inspired certain Holy Men, that is, made clear Impressions of his own Sentiments upon their Minds, and then also guided and governed them in the writing and publishing the aforesaid Impressions for the use of others.

What is meant by God's inditing the Holy Scripture, and the reasonableness of it.

That it is easie for God Almighty to imprint his own sense upon the Minds of such Men as he shall chuse for that purpose, you cannot doubt when you consider that Power of his which he displayed in the Creation, and that therefore the Minds of Men must needs be *in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter*, so that he can mold and figure them as he pleases.

That he can give assurance to the Minds of such Men, that it is he himself that makes those Impressions upon them, and no other Agent, you have acknowledged already; and there can be no more cause to doubt it, than you have, whether it be I that speak to you, or a Spirit out of the Wall: for certainly God hath

ways enough to diſtinguiſh himſelf and his Motions from Illuſions.

The Holy Scripture is the ſupply of the defects of Natural Reaſon.

That alſo he ſhould be able to guide and govern thoſe Holy Pen-men in the writing of what he himſelf had put into their Minds, and in delivering his ſenſe ſo fully and clearly as to anſwer his end, and become a ſufficient Rule for Men to govern themſelves by, muſt be granted, or you make him more impotent than a Man.

Laſtly, That he could by his Providence preſerve the Books ſo written from being imbezel'd or corrupted, that ſo they may anſwer the ends aforeſaid, cannot be denied without denying his Providence, and ſubverting the Foundation of Religion.

So that in ſumm, this way of the Holy Scripture muſt needs be a very ſufficient way of Divine Legiſlation, and an abundant ſupply of the Defects of Natural Reaſon in Divine Things.

Bioph. I grant all you have hitherto ſaid, which amounts to no more but this, That it is not impoſſible for God to do ſo; but now the queſtion is, How ſhall it appear that (*de facto*) he hath done ſo? or (which amounts to the ſame thing) how do you prove that thoſe Books (commonly call'd the Bible) are indeed what they pretend to be?

Sebaſt. There lies the pinch of the buſineſs indeed, as you well obſerve; and therefore, in order to your full ſatisfaction

ction in that point, let me desire you to lay together the four following Particulars.

The proof of the Divine Authority of the Books of Holy Scripture.

First, It cannot be denied but that the Books of Holy Scripture are (at least generally speaking) the most Ancient Monuments in the whole World. Wherefore, besides the Veneration which we commonly allow to Antiquity, it is apparent th at they have indured the test of all times past, and that all the Wit of Man hath not been able hitherto to find any considerable flaw in them, and consequently their Authority and Credibility is so much greater than any other Books, by how much the time is longer since they were written and published; for there have not been wanting those that have endeavoured to expose them, and if they had been able to have done it, doubtless long ere this time, these Books had lost all their Veneration: But since they still retain their Dignity and Esteem (notwithstanding all efforts of their Enemies to the contrary) there is ground enough to believe they never shall be able to do it, and consequently that there can be no reasonable Suspicion of the truth of them.

To which may be added, That since Divine Providence hath also so long preserved and watched over these Writings, it is very natural to collect that therefore they are such as he peculiarly owns and recommends to us.

Secondly, It is to be conſidered that the Doctrine of theſe Books is perfectly agreeable to the natural Notions we have of God, and therefore being fit for him to be the Author of, they muſt conſequently be fit for us to entertain, as coming from him, at leaſt upon reaſonable evidence of fact that they did ſo.

If indeed any Man could juſtly charge theſe Writings as containing any thing abſurd or impoſſible, or make appear that they countenanced ſuch things as are diſagreeable to what we naturally know of God, or can diſcern to be in him by the beſt improvement of our Underſtanding: Then (as I have granted before) we could not be bound to believe them, although they ſhould be ſuppoſed to have all the Confirmation imaginable; for no Man can believe what he will, nor be obliged to act contrary to the natural Senſe and Principles of his Mind, upon any Authority whatſoever.

But whenſoever a Doctrine is propounded that is reaſonable in it ſelf, and beſides hath reaſonable evidence that it came from God, and is part of his revealed Will, then it is highly reaſonable that we ſhould receive it as ſuch, notwithſtanding ſome trifling Objections which may be to the contrary.

Thirdly, It is eſpecially to be minded that the Doctrine of the Holy Scripture hath not wanted ſuch ſpecial aſſurances

rance that it came from God, as were fit for him to give, or for Men to expect. For all thoſe Holy Men that delivered any part of it to the World, were abetted by Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of what they ſo delivered: ſo that either God Almighty muſt be ſuppoſed to ſet the Seal of his Omnipotency to a Falſhood, or elſe theſe Doctrines are the diſcoveries of the Mind of God.

Now that there was ſuch miraculous proof, we may be aſſured in the general by this Conſideration, that it is not imaginable that ſuch Doctrine and ſuch Books ſhould have obtained that credit in the times when they were ſet on foot, without ſuch Confirmation, eſpecially ſince the matter of thoſe Writings in a great part was ſo very different from the Notions, and Practices, and Intereſts of thoſe Ages and Perſons to whom they were publiſhed. " Inſomuch that (as a great Man ſaid of old) " to ſuppoſe the World " to be brought to the reception of theſe " Doctrines without a Miracle, might " juſtly ſeem the greateſt Miracle that " ever was.

And in particular, that the Books of the Old Teſtament had ſuch Divine Atteſtation, the very Books themſelves frequently appeal to, or at leaſt give us the Hiſtory of ſuch things of this kind as could neither be withſtood and denied by the Men of the preſent Age when they

were done, nor confuted by thoſe that came after; beſides the famous Spirit of Prophecy, which diſplayed it ſelf all along thoſe times (of which more by and by.)

And then for the New Teſtament, beſides all the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that one of his Reſurrection was a thing both ſo notorious to be obſerved, and ſo eaſie to have been confuted if it had been falſe, that there is no colour of reaſon to doubt of it, and conſequently none to doubt of his Doctrine: and then in the Apoſtles times, that miraculous ability of ſpeaking with all kind of Tongues, which was ſuddenly beſtowed upon the Chriſtians on the famous days of *Pentecoſt*, *Act.* c. 2. v. 1. was a thing equally ſtupendous in it ſelf, and irrefragable in its Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion.

Now I have ſhewed you before, that whatſoever point hath been once ſufficiently proved, it muſt be true for ever, and there can be no reaſon to expect after-Miracles for Confirmation of it.

Laſtly, It is obſervable that the ſeveral parts of Holy Scripture, I mean the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, (as they are uſually diſtinguiſhed) do, like a pair of Indentures, juſtifie one another, and aſſure us that there can be no fraud nor forgery in either of them; for beſides that, they bearing witneſs to one

one another, one of them cannot be falſe, unleſs the other be ſo too; and if either of them be proved by Articles, the other would be fully aſſured by the ſame means, although it had no Miracles peculiar to it ſelf.

Beſides this I ſay, it is, in the firſt place, certain that theſe ſeveral Books, or Parts of Holy Scripture were written and publiſhed in ſeveral Ages of the World which were very remote from each other, and conſequently by ſuch Men as could poſſibly hold no correſpondence or confederacy with each other.

And then again, ſecondly, it is as plain alſo that (for inſtance) the Old Teſtament foretels, many Ages before, what things ſhould come to paſs many Ages after; wherefore if thoſe things come to paſs accordingly, there can be no doubt but God inſpired thoſe Men that propheſied thoſe things: and if the New Teſtament, on the other ſide, contain a Relation of ſuch Events as fully anſwer to thoſe Predictions, then are both of them moſt certainly true.

And now laying theſe four things together, and only ſetting aſide the demand of preſent and daily Miracles, which I have ſhewed to be unreaſonable to expect, I pray tell me, *Biophilus*, what farther evidence can any ingenuous Man require in ſuch a caſe as this is?

Bioph.

Bioph. To ſpeak the truth from my Heart, I cannot tell.

Sebaſt. Why then I hope, *Biophilus*, you think your ſelf now concerned in thoſe ſacred Records, and for the time to come will make them a principal part of your ſtudy, eſpecially the New Teſtament.

Bioph. I plainly ſee I ought to do ſo; but why do you lay the Emphaſis eſpecially on the New Teſtament?

Sebaſt. For no leſs reaſon than becauſe that part of Holy Scripture contains the cleareſt and fulleſt diſcovery of the Mind of God, as being the ultimate and moſt perfect Declaration of himſelf, made by the very Son of God in humane Nature.

Bioph. I am hitherto an utter ſtranger to the Contents of thoſe Books; (to my ſhame be it ſpoken) I pray therefore, give me in ſhort the Summ of them.

The Summ of the New Teſtament.

Sebaſt. Nay, for that you muſt excuſe me, and let me by all means adviſe you to ſtudy the Books themſelves, they are eaſie to be had, and I can aſſure you, you will receive greater Satisfaction, and profit more by that courſe, than by any Epitome I can make of them.

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebaſtian*, it is not my Intention to decline the reading of the New Teſtament, but you perceive I have loſt too much time already, therefore let me again requeſt you to give me (at leaſt) a compendious view of the

the principal things contained in theſe Writings.

Sebaſt. Since you will have it ſo, I comply with your deſires, and as far as I can comprehend ſo great and weighty a Subject, and ſo full a Writing in my Mind, I muſt tell you, *The New Teſtament* principally conſiſts of theſe three things.

Firſt, An exact and excellent rule of Holy Living, by comforming our ſelves to which, we ſhall moſt certainly pleaſe God, and moſt effectually procure his Favour.

Secondly, The moſt powerful and effectual motives to provoke us to an uniform and thorough compliance with the aforeſaid Rule.

Thirdly, The moſt proper means and aſſiſtances to that end, that ſo we may not only be incouraged to undertake, but inabled to accompliſh that Holy courſe which is propounded and preſcribed.

This (I take it) is a Summary of the whole Goſpel, at leaſt (as I ſaid) the principal Contents of it.

For by the firſt of theſe Particulars we have a Law given us to guide our Conſciences, and a generous Model or Deſign of raiſing and improving the ſtate of Mankind.

By the ſecond our Affections are inflamed, and our endeavours encouraged proportionably to the deſign aforeſaid, and by the laſt particular our infirmities are relieved, and we are aſſured of attaining that glorious

glorious Deſign, if we be not wanting to our ſelves.

Bioph. I wonder in my heart what made you ſo unwilling to gratifie this requeſt of mine; by this little glimpſe which you have now afforded me, I ſee plainly that thoſe Books contain a very admirable Inſtitution, unleſs it be that you have ſome ſtrange art in repreſenting things, and raiſing ones Opinion.

Sebaſt. No, aſſure your ſelf, *Biophilus*, there is no art in the caſe, but the mere excellency of Chriſtianity appearing in its genuine *Colours*, as you will be more throughly convinced when you have ſtudied it well, and eſpecially have made experiment of it in practice.

The peculiar Laws of the Chriſtian Religion.

Bioph. As cold and diffident as my temper hath been hitherto, I am now on the ſudden inflamed, I am inamoured on this Idea of Religion you ſpeak of: pray therefore explain theſe things more fully to me; and firſt I deſire to know more particularly what the peculiar Laws and Rules of this Inſtitution are.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you muſt know, that this Inſtitution of the Goſpel, being (as I ſaid) the laſt and ultimate Revelation of the Divine Will, muſt conſequently be more exact and perfect than any other; yet notwithſtanding it is not deſtructive, but only perfective of thoſe that went before it: and therefore, as it contradicts no former Prophecy or Revelation of God's Will; ſo it repeals no

Law

Law of Nature or Reaſon, derogates from no Rule of Piety, Gratitude, Civility or Humanity, but only adds to them and improves them; for ſo our Saviour himſelf hath told us, *He came not to deſtroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them.* So that indeed the Chriſtian Inſtitution is a pandect or digeſt of all that is *grave, decent, prudent, vertuous or praiſe-worthy,* all which things, it not only re-inforces by more powerful Arguments (as I will ſhew you by and by) but requires every of them in greater Perfection. But now the Supplement or Addition it makes to all thoſe, is that which is to be called the peculiar Character of this Religion, and that, I think, may be reduced to theſe three Heads.

Mat. 5. 17.

Phil. 4. 8.

Firſt, It injoins a more excellent and ſpiritual Worſhip of God.

Secondly, A more refined Purity of Heart and Life.

Thirdly, A more noble, generous, and diffuſive Charity.

1. The Goſpel preſcribes a more Spiritual Worſhip than was in uſe in the World before; for our Saviour expreſly affirms, *The time now comes when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the father in ſpirit and truth,* and gives the reaſon, *becauſe God is a ſpirit,* &c. It is true, God ever was a Spirit, and it is impoſſible he ſhould ever have been otherwiſe (as I have ſhown you before) but his Spiritual Nature was not ſo well underſtood hereto-

Joh. 4. 23, 24.

More Spiritual Worſhip peculiarly required by the Goſpel.

fore,

fore, whilſt he was wont to repreſent himſelf by Fire, or in humane ſhape amongſt Men; and whilſt he required to have a Temple built for his reſidence, as if he required an External State of Grandeur or bodily accommodation; and laſtly, whilſt he required Sacrifices and Oblations to be made to him of ſuch things as are of value amongſt Men, as if he was a neceſſitous Deity, and uſed to eat and drink as his Worſhippers do. But now, ſince he hath given proof of his mighty Majeſty, without thoſe viſible appearances, and the Sons of Men are better inſtructed that he is a pure Spirit without all mixture of Matter, and infinitely full, perfect and happy in himſelf, without any Acceſſion of other things to him: Henceforth he will not be worſhipped with the Steams of Blood and Fat, nor pleaſed with clouds of Incenſe, but with hearty Adorations, with raiſed Affections, with the Contemplations of pure Minds, with inward Reverence and Admiration of him, with devout Prayers and Praiſes offered to him, with Love, with Truſt and Confidence in him, and endeavours of conforming our ſelves to him; This is the Worſhip that is ſuitable to a good, an happy, and a ſpiritual Being, yet not excluding bodily Expreſſions of Reverence neither, but as principally requiring the former, and making this latter only the acceſſary and effect of that.

2. The

2. The Goſpel requires a more refined Temper of Heart and Life than was uſually practiſed, or eaſie to be arrived at before; namely, it preſcribes to our inward Man as well as our outward Actions, and that our Hearts be pure as well as our bodily Members; that our Reaſon have the maſtery of our Luſts and Paſſions, ſo that we neither indulge our ſenſuality in the intemperate uſe of Pleaſure, nor live as if we were born to eat and drink, but be in ſome meaſure above the guſto and reliſh of bodily entertainments; that we ſubdue our Paſſions and Inclinations to Anger and Revenge, and ſoar above the tempeſt of this World, ſo as to deſpiſe the uſual cares, and fears, and ſolicitudes of the preſent Life, and enjoy our ſelves in a kind of Divine Tranquility and Security. *Purity of Heart is another great and peculiar Law of Chriſtianity.*

The generality of Mankind, both Jews and Pagans, thought it a mighty felicity to hoard up Riches, to graſp Civil Power, a raviſhing thing to ſwim in ſenſual Pleaſures, and nothing was counted either more ſweet or more brave than to revenge a Man's ſelf when he thought he was affronted; but as the glory of all theſe things is faded by the light of the Goſpel, ſo the deſires of them are to be mortified by the Laws of Chriſtianity; the Mind is to be freed of theſe ſordid entertainments, and to be taken up with more pure and ſpiritual Delights, with intellectual Pleaſures, with the treaſures of

of Wiſdom and Knowledge, with the Glory of Conqueſt (not over other Men, but) over our ſelves, our brutal Luſts, with the Joys of God's Favour, and the peace of our own Conſcience.

Univerſal Charity another peculiar Law of the Chriſtian Religion.

3. And laſtly, This Religion requires a larger Spirit, and a more noble and diffuſive Charity than agrees with the common Standard of the World, or than was preſcribed by any other Religion. The Charity of a Pagan commonly extended no farther than his Family and Friends, or at moſt to his own City and Countrey; and that of the Jews to their own Nation and Religion only: but to love their Enemies was by both of them look'd upon as ſo far from neceſſary, that it was thought impoſſible and abſurd. Whereas this Inſtitution requires us to love our very Enemies, and thoſe that mortally hate us; to render good for evil; to embrace all the World in our Affections; to look upon all Mankind as our Brethren, the Children of one common Parent; that there be no Men ſo ſilly or peeviſh, ſo mean and contemptible, or ſo remote from us in Blood, Countrey, Manners or Opinion, but we be ready to do all good Offices toward them; to oblige them by kindneſs; and to conquer and over-power them by real inſtances of good Will and indearing Carriage. This (as I take it) is the Summ of the Chriſtian Law, and the peculiar Character of that Religion,

Religion, at leaſt ſo far as concerns the rule of living.

Bioph. You have thus far, I confeſs, deſcribed a very brave Inſtitution, but ſure all this is only matter of ſpeculation, or at moſt a draught of ſome Monaſtick Order; it is poſſible perhaps in their retired way of living (where they are free from the temptations and provocations that are incident to other Men) ſomething at this rate may be pretended to, or at leaſt dreamed of, but ſure theſe Laws are too ſtrict to be practicable, or indeed poſſible to the generality of Mankind, and then according to your own rule they cannot come from God, who muſt be ſuppoſed ſo wiſe as to know what Men are capable of performing, and to be too juſt to require impoſſibilities.

Sebaſt. You will better judge of that matter by and by, when you have conſidered the Motives and Aſſiſtances this Religion affords, as well as the Rules it preſcribes: for you know that things of this nature are difficult or eaſie in proportion to the incouragements to undertake and conflict with them. Great rewards raiſe great Spirits, and you can never tell what any Man will come to, till you underſtand what Inducements and Motives he ſhall be acted by: now by that time you have heard what remains to be ſaid concerning the Chriſtian Religion, I do not doubt but you will pronounce it to be every whit as

fecible in practice as noble in ſpeculation.

The peculiar Motives or Incouragements of the Goſpel.

Bioph. You ſay right; for God's ſake therefore go on, and in the next place repreſent to me the Inducements the Goſpel affords a Man to live at ſuch a rate as you have ſpoken of.

Sebaſt. Why then, the ſecond thing remarkable in the Goſpel is, the powerful Motives it makes uſe of to provoke Men to an uniform compliance with its Laws, and they are eſpecially theſe three.

Firſt, It charms Men by a lively draught of the Divine Goodneſs.

Secondly, It provokes them by the Example of our Saviour.

Thirdly, It inflames them by the promiſe of Eternal Life.

The firſt Motive is the Divine Goodneſs lively and powerfully ſet forth in the Goſpel.

1. The Goſpel makes ſo lively a Repreſentation of the Divine Goodneſs and Clemency, eſpecially in the free Pardon and total Abolition of all Sin paſt (upon Condition of a generous Piety and Vertue for the time to come) that it powerfully works upon Mens ingenuity, and melts them into a compliance with the moſt difficult terms that ſuch Goodneſs can be capable of propounding to them and requiring of them. Do but think with your ſelf, if you had ſo far offended your Prince and violated the Laws of your Countrey, that Majeſty was exaſperated, and Juſtice armed with ſeverity againſt you, ſo that you was under a terrible Sentence, and expected a ſpeedy Execution; now in this caſe if notwithſtanding

ſtanding your Prince ſhould condeſcend to make you an offer of Pardon and full Reſtitution to your former capacity, upon certain terms; Would not you (I ſay) be willing to enter upon a very difficult Service, and undertake the moſt hazardous Enterprize? Would you then be nice and captious, or ſtand carping and capitulating? Nay, would you not be inflamed with Reſolution, ſpirited by Gratitude, and find your ſelf to become more than your ſelf, in ſuch an undertaking?

Now this is the caſe, *Biophilus*: we have infinitely offended Almighty God in the whole courſe of our Lives, and ſo are juſtly fallen under his Diſpleaſure, inſomuch that a Sentence of Eternal Death is paſs'd againſt us; notwithſtanding, in the Goſpel an Overture of Reconciliation is made, and upon thoſe terms I mentioned even now, he offers to receive us into Favour, that all our Sins, how many and great ſoever, ſhall be blotted out, and never come in remembrance again; the Sentence ſhall be revoked; we ſhall never be upbraided with our Follies; no cloud ſhall hang over us; no ill Character be upon us; but our Conſciences ſhall be quiet, and God Almighty will everlaſtingly ſhine upon us. Now can any Man in this caſe expoſtulate the terms with God Almighty? Can he find in his Heart to complain of the trouble of his Service,

the difficulty of Self-denial, or think it hard to be obliged to forgive other Men upon condition of God's forgiving him? No ſurely: he will heartily embrace the Propoſitions; he will love and thank God with all his Soul, and rejoice in difficulty it ſelf, that he may give proof of his gratitude, and be only ſorry that he can give no better evidence of it: in a word, he will be inflamed in his Reſolutions, and winged in his endeavours of ſerving and pleaſing ſuch a God: *a God of Mercy, rich in Mercy and Goodneſs, pardoning Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin*; forgiving old and great and the moſt diſ-ingenuous Sinners.

Bioph. Oh! *Sebaſtian*, you break my Heart: enough, enough; I cannot forbear——

The Example of our Saviour another Goſpel-motive.

Sebaſt. The ſecond Motive of the Goſpel is the Example of our Saviour himſelf: this it ſets before us, and by this it provokes us to compliance with the Laws aforeſaid. That he was the very Son of God, *the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Character of his Majeſty*, I have intimated before, and all the miraculous Glories of his Birth, Life, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion to Heaven have abundantly demonſtrated it; now that *He* ſhould come down from Heaven to Earth, and there frame himſelf to an exact conformity to the aforeſaid Laws of the Goſpel, is not a greater inſtance

Heb. 1. 2.

inſtance of his admirable Self-humiliation, than of the incomparable Excellency, Wiſdom and Goodneſs of thoſe Laws, in that they are ſuch as God himſelf thought fit to be ſubject to them himſelf, as well as to recommend them to us.

For now certainly no Man can be ſo prodigiouſly abſurd, as to account it a mean drudgery to be converſant in that way of worſhipping God which the Goſpel teaches, ſeeing Chriſt Jeſus himſelf made it not only his buſineſs but his delight.

No Man ſurely can think himſelf hardly uſed, if he be a little reſtrained in the uſe of bodily Pleaſures, ſince the Son of God, when he was in Humane Fleſh diſdained them.

No Man can be ſo fond as to admire Riches, and Honours, and the Preferments of this World, which our Saviour could have had in the greateſt meaſure that is imaginable, if he had not deſpiſed them: no Man can be ſo madly paſſionate, as to think that to revenge himſelf is a great point of Glory, and that it is unmanly to omit it, when he obſerves the Son of God, who could have done it effectually, inſtead thereof, only praying for his Enemies: nor can any Man be ſo mean-ſpirited as either to be vainly puffed up with Proſperity, or ſink under Adverſity, Reproach, or the deepeſt Contempt imaginable, that ſees the

Son of God to be the pooreſt, meaneſt, and moſt ignominiouſly treated of all Men.

Beſides, it is farther conſidered that there is no colour for any Man to pretend an impoſſibility of the thing, or impotency in himſelf to perform any of the forementioned, or any other duty of Chriſtianity, ſince our Saviour performed them all in Humane Nature, wherein he was ſubject to the ſame infirmities, aſſaulted with the ſame temptations, and preſſed with the ſame neceſſities that we are; he had the ſame Fleſh and Blood, felt the ſame pains, was hungry, thirſty and weary, as we are, and ſo there is no excuſe to be made in our caſe that would not have been as reaſonable in his.

Now all this conſidered (together with the mighty power of example in general, as that it takes away the pretence of Ignorance, baffles the Plea of Impotency, ſhames Cowardiſe, and kindles Emulation) cannot but have the force of a mighty Motive, and prevail upon all ingenuous Perſons *to caſt away every weight and the ſin that beſets them, and to run with Patience* and Courage *the Race ſet before them.*

Heb. 12. 1.

The promiſe of eternal life the principal Motive of the Goſpel.

3. But the third and moſt powerful Motive of the Goſpel is yet behind, and that is the promiſe of Eternal Life to all thoſe that frame themſelves by the Rules aforeſaid. And that whereas the

the beſt that other Men can hope for, is, to rot in their Graves, and everlaſtingly to be forgotten (but that will not ſerve their turn, for they ſhall certainly ſuffer the vengeance of Eternal Fire ;) Theſe, on the contrary, that live by the Laws of the Goſpel, ſhall be raiſed again out of the Duſt, and out-live the very Heavens in unſpeakable and endleſs Felicity.

That this is not a Dream, but a real Truth you may be thus aſſured. Firſt, For the poſſibility of it, becauſe I have ſhewed you already that God is a neceſſary Being, and muſt live for ever ; and therefore he that had it in his power to make things out of nothing, cannot want ability to preſerve ſuch things in being as it pleaſeth him. And then, Secondly, That he will do ſo, is the great promiſe of the Goſpel, which he delivered by his own Son, and *whereof he hath given aſſurance in that he raiſed him from the Dead.* Acts 17. 31.

Now, *Biophilus*, this is ſuch a thing, this Living for ever, I ſay, is ſuch a Motive, that it is able to make a Man to defie all difficulty ſo far as even to be inflamed the more by the apprehenſion of it, and to ſtick at nothing but flat impoſſibility ; but never any Man yet had the folly to object that in the caſe : it may be ſaid to be difficult to maintain a conſtant attendance upon God's Worſhip, a little uneaſie to deny

our preſent delight and pleaſure, ſomething againſt the Grain to ſtifle our paſſions, and to lay aſide revenge; but never any body ſaid or thought any of them to be abſolutely impoſſible.

For it is plain in experience that many Men have undergone greater hardſhips than any are required in the Goſpel, either to demonſtrate their Love, or to purſue their Paſſion; in compliance with their Fears, or for the ſake of their Intereſts; ſometimes out of Flattery, and ſometimes out of mere Reverence of ſome Perſon; but at any time for ſelf-ſecurity and preſervation: Now whatſoever may be done upon thoſe inconſiderable grounds, moſt certainly cannot be impoſſible to be done when Eternal Life is at ſtake: and this being, as I have ſaid, plainly propounded in the Goſpel as the great Wager to him that runs that Race, and withal being impoſſible to be obtained upon any other terms, muſt needs make *the Yoke of Chriſt* ſeem (at leaſt comparatively) *eaſie, and his Burthen light.* And ſo much for the ſecond principal point of Chriſtianity.

Matt. 11. 30.

Bioph. Now, *Sebaſtian*, you have increaſed my wonder more than ever, though, I muſt confeſs, you have tranſlated it to another ſubject; foraſmuch as whereas I ſuſpected before the poſſibility of complying with thoſe ſtrict Laws of the Goſpel, now I am as much amazed

mazed that any body ſhould complain of difficulty in them, thoſe things conſidered which you have laſt repreſented.

Sebaſt. God be thanked for that change, *Biophilus*, but your wonder of the ſecond ſort will be yet heightned, when you conſider alſo the aſſiſtances that the Goſpel affords us towards the performance of what it requires, which is the third and laſt of thoſe things whereby I deſigned to repreſent the ſumm of it to you; and (to be ſhort) that conſiſts principally in theſe two things.

The Aſſiſtances and Helps which the Goſpel affords towards the performing of its Laws.

1. The inward aſſiſtance and co-operation of God's Holy Spirit.

2. The outward advantages of the Society of his Church.

Firſt, the co-operation of the Holy Spirit.

Firſt, He that by his Son hath required ſuch things of us as the aforeſaid, namely, Spiritual Worſhip, Purity of Heart, and univerſal Charity, hath alſo promiſed by his Divine Power to co-operate with us in the diſcharge of them, and then there can be no ſuch thing as impoſſibility, nor ſcarcely ſo much as difficulty in the caſe: for what is impoſſible to Almighty Power? Or what burthen can there be to compla·n of, when we have ſuch an helper?

But the meaning of this is not, that God will do all for us without us, ſo as that we ſhall be only paſſive, and recipients of his Impreſſions, as ſome have very abſurdly fanſied: for then all the

the acts of Piety and Vertue would be more properly God's Acts than ours, and could be capable of no praiſe or reward as proceeding from us: and beſides, this could not be called Divine Aſſiſtance, but his Creation rather, ſince in ſuch an exertion of his own Omnipotency, he did wholly over-bear or ſuperſede our endeavours.

But the meaning is this, That whenſoever any Man (in Contemplation of the Motives and Incouragements aforeſaid) ſets himſelf in earneſt to comply with that which God by the Laws of the Goſpel hath made to be his duty, from thenceforth he ſhall not only have the benefit of a common Providence in upholding and ſtrengthening the Powers of his Mind, nor only find the effects of a more eſpecial Providence in removing Obſtacles, and making his way eaſie to him, but by the vital Power and Efficacy of the Divine Spirit his Mind ſhall be more enlightned to ſee the excellency of the thing he goes about; his Will ſhall be confirmed and ſtrengthened in its choice and reſolution; his Affections quickened in the purſuit and execution of that choice: and above all, his Heart ſhall be cheared in the whole enterpriſe with unſpeakable Joy, and many times with an admirable and raviſhing proſpect of the Glory that ſhall attend and crown his performance.

This

This our Saviour promiſed to the Chriſtian Church before he left the World and aſcended to Heaven, *viz.* That he would this way be *preſent with them to the end of the World*, and hereof he gave a great earneſt when on the famous day of *Pentecoſt* the Holy Spirit came in a very prodigious manner upon all the Apoſtles and Chriſtians that were aſſembled together as the Repreſentative and Seminary of his future Church; and it was done (amongſt other reaſons) to give aſſurance that he was mindful of his promiſe, and that all Ages after might juſtly expect the preſence of his Spirit with them (though not ſo viſible as in that extraordinary inſtance) which accordingly good Men at all times find true by comfortable experience.

Matt. 28. 20.

Acts 2. 1.

Bioth. This which you now tell me is the ſtrangeſt thing that ever I heard of in my Life; if this be true, it will be ridiculous to object difficulty againſt the Chriſtian Inſtitution, for upon this Suppoſition it is plain there can be nothing but ſottiſhneſs or obſtinacy, cowardiſe and credulity, to hinder a Man in obſerving the Laws of it. But I pray however proceed in your method, and ſhew me alſo, in the next place, what are thoſe external helps and advantages which you intimated?

Sebaſt. The external advantage of this Religion which I eſpecially intended, is the

The ſecond or external aſſi-

ſtance of the Goſpel, is the advantage of the Society of a Church.

the Inſtitution of a Chriſtian Church, that is, the Son of God the Author of this Religion, ordered that all thoſe who imbraced it, and became his Diſciples, ſhould not content themſelves to live ſingly and ſeparately, as if they were unconcerned one in another, but unite themſelves into a Body or Spiritual Polity; and that although they were to be reſpectively ſubject to the Civil Governments under which they lived (at leaſt ſo far as the Laws of Men intrenched not upon thoſe of his Religion) yet they were to be under a ſtricter tye of Unity amongſt themſelves, and to become a diſtinct Corporation under peculiar Officers, as well as for peculiar ends and purpoſes. Nor was this a mere arbitrary or poſitive Law of his, and to be obſerved only becauſe he was commanded it, but as it was injoined with admirable Wiſdom on his part, ſo it was no leſs of ſingular advantage to all his Diſciples in innumerable reſpects, ſome of which I am ingaged to repreſent to you in particular.

The great advantages of Church-Society.

And firſt, The Conſtitution of this Society of a Church, was an excellent Expedient for the preſerving and holding up of the Doctrine of Chriſtianity in the World, and for the Prevention both of Corruptions and Errors in the Laws, and of miſtakes in the great Motives and Incouragements of this Religion. Hence the Church is called by the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*;

1 Tim. 3. 15.

not

not that the Church properly gives authority to the Doctrine of our Religion, for that it hath immediately from our Saviour himſelf, and from the Miracles wrought by God to atteſt it (as I ſhew'd before;) but becauſe the Church was the conſervatory of the Books wherein the Doctrine was written, and a witneſs of the aforeſaid proofs made of the Divinity of it, and competent to ſecure us from impoſture, and to preſerve and hold forth thoſe ſacred Books that contained it as the ſumm and code of our Religion. Accordingly it is obſervable, that in the rage of Pagan Perſecution in the time of *Dioclesian*, and when the Enemies of this Religion grew to that heighth of Pride and Confidence, as to promiſe to themſelves to root out all memory and remains of Chriſtianity, the care and zeal of this Society preſerved this ſacred *depoſitum* of Holy Scripture intire to after Ages, when otherwiſe private Perſons would or might out of fear and weakneſs have delivered them up to be deſtroy'd.

Again, ſecondly, This way of incorporating Chriſtians in the Society of a Church, was a more eaſie and ready way for the Inſtruction of the ſeveral Perſons of which that Society conſiſted, and neceſſary for the publiſhing, explaining, and inculcating the Doctrine and Laws of their Religion to them. For if our Saviour had appointed Paſtours and not a Flock (unleſs he had made the former

as

as numerous almoſt as the latter) it had been impoſſible that they ſhould have inſtructed all his Diſciples; but now he having appointed and obliged them to join together in a Body, the ſame Paſtour and the ſame Labour that inſtructs one may inſtruct many. It is in this caſe as it is with thoſe Creatures that need the aſſiſtance, and are fed by the Hand of Man, God hath ordered them by Nature to join in Flocks and Herds, that they might be the more capable of Humane Culture, and anſwer the labour and care Men beſtow upon them; whereas wild Beaſts, they live ſingly, and therefore are left to ſhift for themſelves. Now this is a great advantage to all the Diſciples of this Religion, that thoſe that cannot read nor ſtudy, nor are capable of feeding themſelves, by this Society of a Church, God hath provided a way for their conſtant and eaſie Inſtruction by the publick Miniſtry of his Goſpel.

Moreover, thirdly, By means of ſuch a Society and Officers appointed over it, there is proviſion made for the Reſolution of all Doubts, and for the eaſe and ſatisfaction of melancholy and perplexed Conſciences, which is a ſingular advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church. For it is not to be ſuppoſed but that there will be a great number of well-meaning Men who may either want parts and ability to judge of ſeveral things that may concern them, or may want

want leiſure to conſider ſo maturely as a difficulty may require, or may not be impartial enough in their own caſe to guide their own Conſciences; now for the relief of ſuch as theſe, it is of great uſe to be in the Society of a Church where God hath appointed ſuch to be Officers in it *who have the Spirit of the Lord upon them to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort thoſe that mourn*; ſuch as have made it their buſineſs to ſtudy the more difficult points of Religion, that they may be able *to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that fainteth*, and whoſe Duty and Province it is not ſo much to make publick Harangues to the Flock, as by particular application to remove Scruples, to ſolve Difficulties, and provide for Emergences; and all this they may well be ſuppoſed to be able to do with great ſincerity and impartiality, as alſo with great Authority, as being hereunto appointed by God himſelf, and aſſiſted herein by the Holy Spirit.

Iſai. 61. 1, 2.

Iſai. 50. 4.

Fourthly, There is this farther advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church, that the Members of this Society are not only more likely to animate and inflame one another in the ways of Vertue and Piety by mutual example, but alſo being concerned in one another, as of the ſame Body, and for the Honour of their common Faith and Religion, are authorized to watch over one another, to correct the erro-

neous,

neous, to admoniſh the careleſs, to reprove the vicious, to ſtrengthen the weak, to incourage the good, and, in a word, are obliged in an extraordinary manner to all Offices of Charity and Pity towards one another.

All which together muſt needs be a mighty means of ſecuring both the Doctrine and Practice of Religion and of promoting all the ends of it.

When a Man hath not only the comfort of his private Conſcience whenſoever he doth bravely, but the publick Acclamations of the whole Church; and contrariwiſe, when he doth any thing baſely and viciouſly, he is not only under the ſecret laſhes of his own guilty Mind, but expoſed to ſhame and reproach, and incurrs the Cenſure of the whole Society. When a Man cannot be fantaſtical and affect Novelty, but ſuch an honourable Body is concerned for his danger, and obliged to uſe their endeavours to reclaim him, and if that be inſucceſsful, are put to make a publick Lamentation for him: nor, on the other ſide, can any Man acquit himſelf as a worthy Champion for the Truth, and miſs of a Laurel in this World, ſince he ſhall be ſure to have the Gratulations and honourable Eſteem of ſuch a Society. Now if there were no ſuch thing as a Church conſtituted, there would be very few Men found that would take care of thoſe things, and eſpecially few that would

would venture upon the ingrateful Office of Reproving: or if perhaps ſome Perſons might be found who had zeal enough to undertake it, yet as in that caſe it would not eaſily appear to be their duty; ſo neither could it be performed with that authority and ſucceſs as now it may.

But then for the more ordinary Offices of Charity, ſuch as pitying and comforting the weak, ſuccouring the oppreſſed, and relieving the neceſſitous; theſe would not only be coldly performed, but indeed would be thought to be no duties at all, if there was no ſuch thing as a Church whereby Men are incorporated together. For beſides that we find very little of this thought of or practiſed amongſt thoſe that are not of this Society; we may alſo generally take an Eſtimate of Mens Affection to the Church of Chriſt, by their Charity to the Members of it. But if Men believe there is ſuch a Society as a Church inſtituted, and they conſider themſelves as Members of it, then even ſelf-love (which makes others uncharitable) renders theſe highly charitable, becauſe they then look upon others as Members of the ſame Body with themſelves.

Fifthly and Laſtly, The Eſtabliſhment of the Society of a Church, and thereby of publick Worſhip, is an Expedient of unſpeakable comfort and incouragement to all humble and modeſt perſons, and

eſpecially to ſuch as are truly contrite and broken-hearted, in the addreſſing their Prayers to Almighty God, animating them againſt their Senſe of the Guilt of their Sins, the unworthineſs of their Perſons, the imperfection of their prayers, and affording them many Arguments of hope for ſucceſs beyond what they could expect from their private Devotions.

Whilſt they conſider, in the firſt place, that they are now in God's Houſe, or *Court of Requeſts*, where he uſes to give audience to poor Suppliants.

Again, Secondly, That their deſires are put up by the Hands of God's own Miniſter whom he hath appointed to preſent Petitions to himſelf.

Thirdly, That their Prayers are not offered up ſingly and alone, but in conjunction with the Devotions of ſo many other more holy Perſons as the whole Church conſiſts of, ſo that they may hope to ſpeed the better for ſuch company, and eſpecially by the united Efficacy of ſo many ardent Affections.

And, Laſtly, The Faith and Hope of ſuch Men is wonderfully ſtrengthened by the Contemplation of the great Propitiation for ſin, made by our Saviour, and repreſented to their Eyes on the Lord's Table in the Holy Communion. All theſe things were mightily eſteemed by the Chriſtians of old, and certainly are great advantages.

And

And thus I have now laid before you the peculiar Laws of the Goſpel, and ſhewed you alſo the admirable encouragements, and the ſingular Helps and Aſſiſtances God hath afforded us towards the obſervance of thoſe Laws, and the Proſecution of that Religion. Is there any thing more I can ſerve you in?

Bioph. Yes, I plainly ſee there is a great deal more I may learn of you: but God be thanked, and I heartily thank you for what I have learned hitherto.

Sebaſt. You remember I have opened to you the Grounds and Reaſon of Religion in general, and thence led you to the Chriſtian Religion in particular, and by the line of that I have now brought you to the Church, and there I leave you in good hands, and I pray God be with you.

Bioph. You have brought me to ſee the folly of my own Prejudices, which I again thank God and you for: I am convinced of the Reality and Neceſſity of ſome Religion or other, and of the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion above all that ever I heard of, or what I could have imagined; and now I intend in earneſt to bethink my ſelf how to live accordingly.

Sebaſt. Remember withal to keep cloſe to the Church, and be conſtant and diligent in attendance upon the publick Worſhip of God there, that

will be a means both to keep up that good zeal which you are now under, and to preſerve it from running out into wild Extravagancies.

Bioph. I will, *Sebaſtian*, by God's Grace, I will, and in that courſe hope to come to Heaven at laſt.

Phil. What, *Biophilus*, will you turn Knight-Errant now?

Bioph. You neither can nor will, I know, *Philander*, ſo much upbraid me with my former folly, as my own Heart will do it for me; but I will endeavour to make amends for that by my future diligence.

Phil. Ah! God forbid, *Biophilus*, that I, who am ſenſible of my own many Sins, ſhould upbraid your Errors. I embrace you with all my Heart, I heartily welcome you into the way of Heaven; there I am ſure the Angels rejoice at this bleſſed Change, and nothing leſs than Devils can repine at it, and they muſt be a ſort of deſperate Wretches amongſt Men that can upbraid you for what is paſt.

Sebaſt. Well, good night to you both, Gentlemen, I doubt it grows late.

Phil. I hope, good *Sebaſtian*, you are not weary of well-doing; I was unwilling to interrupt you and *Biophilus* in your diſcourſe hitherto, both becauſe it exceedingly confirmed and improved me in what (I thank God) I did believe already, and eſpecially becauſe I did

did not doubt of a good Iſſue of it upon my neighbour; but I have all this while waited for an opportunity to ask your advice in a caſe or two of very great concernment; and now I intreat you allow me the liberty to do it.

Sebaſt. I pray God my power be anſwerable to my will to ſerve you; What is the matter, *Philander*?

Phil. There are theſe two things I would crave your direction in:

Firſt, by what means a Man may maintain his ground, and keep ſtable and ſteadfaſt in Religion in diſtracted times?

And, Secondly, What courſe he ſhould take to maintain an even temper and conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit under all the accidents of the preſent Life?

Sebaſt. Oh! *Philander*, there you have tied me by the Leg; I cannot ſtir a foot from you: thoſe two inquiries are both ſo neceſſary at all times, and ſo peculiarly ſeaſonable at this time, that I ſhould neglect my ſelf as well as you, if I ſhould not be willing to conſider of them with you; and it's pity we have not time more fully to treat of them.

Of Stability in Religion.

But I pray, in the firſt place, let me know what you mean by Stability in Religion? Would you have a Man be peremptory in his judgment, and unmovable from his firſt perſwaſions whatever they were? Do you think it unlawful or diſhonourable for a Man ever

to change his Opinion in Religion? This methinks is no better than a Reſolution, never to be wiſer than a Man is at preſent; nay, to be always a Child and never to out-grow his youthful prejudices and follies: you know it is the hard fortune of ſome Men to have been ill educated, and to have bad Principles inſtilled into them in their injudicious years, and it cannot be imputed to ſuch Men as a vicious Levity or Inconſtancy, but a very vertuous and commendable thing upon maturer judgment to diſcard ſuch Old Wives Fables or juvenile Fancies.

What is meant by Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

Phil. No, *Sebaſtian*, I do not think the Minds of Men ſhould be after the manner of uninhabited Lands, and become *primi occupantis*; nor do I call Perſeverance in an Error Stability, but Stubbornneſs and Obſtinacy. The meaning of my firſt queſtion therefore is only how a Man ſhall be inabled to ſtand firm and tight to the Truth of Chriſtian Religion, that whereof his Judgment is convinced by good Reaſon, and whereof he hath had good Proof and Experience; ſo that he ſhall neither be always trying and ſeeking, and diſputing and doubting on the one hand, nor on the other, in danger to be hector'd out of his Conſcience by any terrour, nor wheedled and complemented out of it by flattery and inſinuation, that no Example of great Men, or of the multi-

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tude may biaſs him, nor Sophiſtry of cunning Men cheat him of his Religion, no Atheiſtical Perſon droll or railly him out of it, nor Scurrility make him aſhamed of it.

Sebaſt. I did not doubt but that was your meaning, and (as I ſaid before) that is a very weighty and important queſtion, both in reſpect of the many Temptations that may at ſome times eſpecially put a Man's Conſtancy hard to it; and in reſpect alſo of the miſchief of yielding or being baffled in that particular.

The Temptations and Dangers of this kind (as you have well intimated) are many: for a Man may be either undermined by Policy, or battered by plain force; he may be wheedled by Complements, or born down by Authority; impoſed upon by Rhetorical flouriſhes, or circumvented by Sophiſtry; or ſome man may indulge his Curioſity to try all things, who hath neither the judgment to diſcern, nor the courage to hold faſt that which is beſt.

The miſchiefs of Levity and Inconſtancy in Religion.

And on the other ſide, the miſchief of yielding in this caſe, or of fore-going the truth (by what means ſoever it be) is very great. For doubtleſs Divine Truth, eſpecially that of the Goſpel, is a very great *depoſitum*, a mighty truſt which God hath repoſed in us, and he that is falſe to it, and either ſoftly or ſillily delivers it up, is a Traitor

both againſt God, and his own Soul.

His ſins againſt God, ungratefully undervaluing ſo great a Bleſſing as the knowledge of true Religion, and playing faſt and looſe with it, as if the Goſpel was fit only to ſerve a turn.

And he intolerably wrongs and cheats himſelf, abandoning the only effectual Principles of true Piety, and the means of improving himſelf to a capacity of eternal Happineſs. For it is a mighty miſtake (as I have noted before) for a Man to think that all Religions are alike, or that ſo a Man be true to any Principles, the purſuit of them will bring him to Heaven.

It is true, ſometimes Men are better than their Opinions, as we ſee amongſt the ſeveral ſorts of deluded Sectaries: there are ſome which we cannot but in charity judge to be good Men, but then it muſt be when the miſtake is only in ſome Notion or inconſiderable Tenets, and when otherwiſe they are right for the main; but where the error is fundamental, or in the ſubſtantial part of Religion, then the very Sinews of Piety are cut, and a Man's zeal in ſuch a caſe will be wild and fruitleſs. For as in Nature, it is impoſſible for Water to riſe higher than its Source or Fountain; ſo it ſeems to be (at leaſt next to) impoſſible in morality, that a Man ſhould be better than his Principles. Therefore, ſaith our Saviour, *Either make the tree good and his fruit*

fruit good, or the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, &c. And again, *if the light that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs*? As if he had ſaid, "It "is true, a Man may *with-hold the truth in* "*unrighteouſneſs*, and be worſe in his Life "than the Principles of his Mind and "Conſcience did require; but if a Man's "Principles themſelves be nought, and "if he have embraced a bad Religion, "what good can be expected from him? Therefore, I ſay, a Man horribly cheats his own Soul, who upon any pretence, or under any Temptation whatſoever, forſakes or blanches the true Principles of Religion. Matt. 12. 33. Matt. 6. 23.

Nay farther, I think it worth the obſerving, that the very unſettledneſs of a Man's Mind, if it be but in mere Opinion, and although he ſhould all the while keep cloſe to the great Principles of Religion, is a great impediment to the growth of Piety and Vertue. For as we ſee a Tree, by being often removed (although it ſhould be ſtill to a better Soil) is hindred both in its growth and fruitfulneſs; ſo we find by ſad experience, that thoſe who are the moſt buſie Diſputers, and who moſt affect Novelty and change of Opinions, do little more than make a noiſe or a ſhew in the World, but are ſo far from improvement in their Lives and Tempers, that contrariwiſe they grow apparently more paſſionate, proud,

proud, ambitious, cenſorious and Schiſmatical.

But to be ſure he that is facile, and unreſolved in his Principles, and of a ductile Conſcience, ſhall never be able to do any honour to his Religion or to himſelf.

As for his Religion: Who ſhall perſwade me to be of his Principles, whom I perceive to be unreſolved of them himſelf?

And for the eſteem of his Perſon that is mutable, this will be his fate, That he ſhall be ſcorned as a Renegado by thoſe very Men that at the ſame time glory in having made him a Proſelyte. All which things (and a great many more, which I need not mention to you) do effectually recommend Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

Phil. I am well aware of the truth of what you ſay, and thereupon I do the more earneſtly intreat you to give me your Advice in the caſe, that I may continue ſtanch and ſtable againſt all the Aſſailants of my Religion, and ſo avoid all the miſchiefs you have given me warning of, as conſequent of Levity and Changing.

Sebaſt. It is not ſo difficult to give advice in this caſe (and that ſuch as would effectually do the buſineſs too) as it is hard to find Men that ask for it in earneſt and with intention to follow it: for ſome, as I told you before, think

think it a very indifferent thing what Religion they are of, ſo they have any thing that is called by that name, at leaſt if it be Chriſtian, and they can ſee the Appearance of a Church, and the Ceremonies and Appendages of Religion amongſt them.

And ſome are ſo ſilly as to think there is no change made if they have but the old Names of things left them; like the *Romans* in their degenerate times, that ſuffered themſelves to be tamely wheedled out of their ancient Liberty, ſo long as the name of a Commonwealth, and a few other terms of Art were retained. Such Men will take Braſs-Money for good Pay, if they ſee but the uſual Face and Inſcription upon it, and you may ſafely ſteal away their Gooſe if you ſtick but down a Feather in the room of it. Some are ſo childiſhly fond of Pomp and Ceremony, that if there appear more of that than ordinary, they will believe Religion to be only improved and not changed.

Some again have ſuch a ſickly longing after Novelty, that they will be always making Experiments though it be at the hazzard of their own Souls, and ſome love their Religion well enough if it coſt them nothing: but they will run no hazards for it. And in fine, there are others that think it a wiſe thing to ſacrifice a Conſcience to gain a potent Friend, and a goodly purchaſe to buy the preſent

preſent World with the loſs of that which is to come.

But I am ſatisfied of the ſincerity of your Temper, and therefore in anſwer to your Demand, I recommend to you theſe three or four things.

Directions for the keeping men ſtable in the true Religion.

1. In the firſt place, you know that your Religion, I mean that which you have been trained up in by the Church of *England*, and which you have always profeſſed, is a Scriptural Religion, *i. e.* ſuch an one as hath not merely preſcribed for it ſelf by cuſtom (though it be certainly elder than thoſe that do ſo) nor derived it ſelf from that headleſs Monſter, unaccountable Tradition, no nor yet from the Subtilty of Humane Philoſophy (though it have more reaſon to plead for it ſelf than any other) but hath taken its riſe from Holy Scripture and Divine Revelation, and conſequently as it is to be proved, ſo it is to be diſproved thence, or nothing can be ſaid to the purpoſe againſt it.

1. *Keep cloſe to the Holy Scriptures.*

Therefore my firſt Advice is, That you ſtudy the Holy Scripture diligently, and ſtick cloſe to that; that, as St. *Paul* hath aſſured us, *is given by inſpiration of God,*

2 Tim. 3. 16. *and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed*

1 Pet. 3. 15. *for all good works*, and from thence a Man *may be able to give a reaſon of the hope that is in him*, i. e. make a ſufficient Apology for, and Defence of his Religion.

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I do not mean hereby, either altogether to evacuate the authority of laudable Cuſtom in ſome certain caſes; or much leſs, that either Tradition or Humane Learning was to be ſligheed; nor leaſt of all, that the Scripture was ſo far a meaſure of our practice, as that every thing became unlawful and not to be admitted in practice, which is not to be proved by expreſs Scripture.

For God ſuppoſed us to be Men of underſtanding when he gave us Divine Revelation, and thought fit to leave ſome Circumſtances of things to be defined by Humane Prudence.

But this I think is certain, that if we pretend our Religion to be derived from Scripture, we muſt then admit nothing which is contrary to that Rule, no nor account any thing to be eſſential to it which that hath not provided for.

For as it could not ſtand with the Divine Wiſdom to abound in ſuperfluities, or to give expreſs directions for what was ſufficiently provided for before; ſo neither could it conſiſt with his Goodneſs to provide a Rule which was defective in Neceſſaries.

And this I think (by the way) was the prime excellency of the Reformation, that (although ſome things perhaps might be erroneous, and many things imperfect in it) yet it revived the true Canon of Chriſtian Religion, the Holy Scripture, and ſo put into Mens Hands

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an eaſie and certain Rule to go by, for beſides other advantages of this Rule, it ſets us upon even ground with the moſt cunning Adverſaries, and forces them to play upon the ſquare with us. Foraſmuch as this (as to the main lines of it) is fitted for all Capacities, that every Man may ſee the Grounds of his Religion.

As for Example, if any Man ſhould perſwade me to worſhip an Idol, or to worſhip the True God by and under an Image, let ſuch a Man uſe all the Art and Sophiſtry he can, he will never be able to impoſe upon him that ſtudies and ſticks to the Holy Scriptures.

Or if another ſhould go about to perſwade me there was an eaſier and ſhorter way to Heaven than by an Holy Life, and that there might be either Diſtinctions or Diſpenſations, or ſome way or other of Commutation found out which would excuſe me that trouble and do my buſineſs as well: I can never be cheated into ſuch a Perſwaſion whilſt I conſult the Holy Scripture, which is as plain and as full as can be deſired in both thoſe caſes: Therefore, as I ſaid, ſtick cloſe to the Holy Scripture, as you deſire to hold your Religion.

2. Make uſe of our Spiritual Guides.

2. But if it all happen that either any thing in the Scripture ſhould ſeem ſo obſcure, or that the Sophiſtry of cunning Men ſhould caſt ſuch a Miſt before us

us that we are not able to determine our ſelves what to do. Then, in the ſecond place, we are to reſort to our Spiritual Guides, which God hath ſet over us, who have baptized us into, and trained us up in our Religion, to help us out.

This is alſo a means of Stability of God's own appointing; for the Apoſtle hath told us that God hath erected thoſe Orders of Men in his Church that we ſhould *not be as Children toſs'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine, and by the cunning craftineſs of Men who lie in wait to deceive.* And theſe having made it their whole buſineſs and ſtudy to be fit for their Office, and to be acquainted with the *Depths of Satan*, as well as the Myſtery of Chriſtianity; I mean, to be able to detect the Frauds and Sophiſtry of Deceivers, as well as to underſtand and explicate the Holy Scripture, and the deep Points of Religion; and being alſo ordinarily to be preſumed, Men of Prudence and Experience: it muſt needs be very fit that theſe ſhould be conſulted and hearkened to with reverence, eſpecially by thoſe that have been deſtitute of the aforeſaid Advantages, and it is very unreaſonable that any Man ſhould make ſo great a Change as that of his Religion is, without the beſt Advice and moſt mature Deliberation of this kind. Ephes. 4. 14.

And this is eſpecially to be heeded in this

this preſent Age when ſuch crafty Gameſters are abroad that uſe ſuch Legerdemain, and to cogg the Die (as the Apoſtle's Phraſe imports in the fore-mentioned place) when, I ſay, there is *ſuch Fox-like Craft*, and *ſuch Methods of Deceit* to gain Proſelytes, That the neglect of this Caution ſeems to be the principal defect and danger of the Members of this Church. The Men of other Perſwaſions, follow their Guides with an implicite Faith, and a blind Obedience, and are ſcarce permitted the uſe of their Reaſon, or to chuſe for themſelves even in the moſt indifferent things. And if we will not uſe ſo much Deference to our Paſtours as to think they may ſee farther than we in controverted Caſes; we ſhall be in danger to hold our Religion no longer than till we ſhall be briskly aſſaulted.

3. Contempt of the World is neceſſary to Stability in Religion.

3. He that would be ſtable in his Religion, muſt learn to contemn the preſent World, without which both the former advices will be uttterly inſignificant for his ſecurity againſt Apoſtaſie. If a Man have the preſent World in admiration, it will dazle his Eyes, blind his Judgment, prejudice his Mind, bribe his Affections, and debauch his Conſcience; for it cannot be but Religion, and the things of another World muſt be cheap with him that over-values the preſent.

Judas, we know, ſold our Saviour at the

the vile rate of thirty pieces of Silver; but Preferment and Honour, Wealth and Glory, are ſo great motives, that the Devil had the confidence to hope to prevail upon our Saviour himſelf to fall down and worſhip him, when he *ſhewed him the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them*, and offered them to him at that price.

To ſwim in Pleaſure, flow with Wealth, and be at the top of the World in Glory, what will not this do with unmortified Hearts? Such Men in ſuch a caſe will (it may be) at firſt ſtrain Curteſie with Conſcience, and find out a thouſand Shifts and Diſtinctions to excuſe themſelves; but rather than fail (and if that will not do) they will cut the knot they cannot untie, and rudely break with Conſcience, rather than withſtand ſo great allurements.

Therefore, *Philander*, if you and I would ſtick faſt to our Principles, we muſt ſit ſomewhat looſe to the World, we muſt entertain no great opinion concerning Wealth and Honour, but be content with little things for the preſent, and comfort our ſelves with the Expectation of great in another World. We muſt conſider with our ſelves how vain and empty thoſe things are, even in this Life, and whilſt they are enjoy'd, and eſpecially how perfectly they vaniſh, and are of no avail at all at the Day of Judgment: *We muſt look at the things*

2 Cor. 4. ult. Rev. 2. 10. *which are not ſeen, and are eternal, the crown of life* (I mean) which God hath prepared for all *thoſe that are faithful to the death.* Then ſhall we be ſtable as the center of the Earth, unchangeable as the Heavens, brave and courageous ſo as to ſcorn allurements, contemn danger, and be true to our real Intereſt, our Conſcience, our God, and our Religion.

4. Fervent and conſtant Prayer to God.

4. If eſpecially to all theſe, in the laſt place, we join fervent and conſtant Prayer to God: for we are not to truſt to our ſelves, but commend to him the fixing our minds and eſtabliſhing our hearts; he made them and knows them, and he only can confirm and ſtrengthen them againſt all our own folly and levity, and againſt all the temptations of the Devil; he can provide that we ſhall not *be led into temptation*, or however, *that no temptation ſhall overtake us but what we ſhall be able to bear*; he can deliver us from all the ſnares that ſhall be laid for us, and help us to elude all ſophiſtry; and, in a word, can upon emergency, and in the very nick of time, beſtow *upon us ſuch a ſpirit and wiſdom as none of our adverſaries ſhall be able to withſtand.*

Luke 21. 15.

Theſe, *Philander*, are the moſt effectual things I can think of for the preſent, in anſwer to your firſt queſtion.

Phil. I thank you heartily, *Sebaſtian*, for the great ſatisfaction you have given me, and I ſhall make it both my own

own care, and the matter of my Prayer to God, that neither the levity of my own Mind, nor the importunity of others, ſhall tempt me from the good old way of the Church of *England*; and that neither any effort of Wit or Power, the blandiſhments of Proſperity, nor the ſtorms of Adverſity, ſhall ſtagger my Reſolution.

And now, becauſe I would not be troubleſome to you too long, be pleaſed as briefly as the caſe will bear to reſolve me alſo in my ſecond inquiry, namely, By what means I may maintain a conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit in the courſe of Chriſtianity. You made it evident at the beginning of this preſent Conference, that there is ſuch a thing attainable, and you will not wonder that I am inquiſitive after ſo ineſtimable a good: And the rather becauſe (it is in vain to be aſhamed to tell you what you cannot but have obſerved your ſelf in me) for my own part, though I am ſometimes very comfortable, and now and then as full of joy as my Heart can hold, yet at other times (whether it be occaſioned by any error of my Life, or by the effect of my Conſtitution of Body, or the weakneſs of my Mind, I cannot tell) it is quite otherwiſe with me, and my Spirits ſink as low as they were high before. Now therefore give me your advice how I may maintain an even temper of chearfulneſs, ſo that I may

Inquiry by what means a Man may maintain an even temper of ſpiritual Comfort

neither ſeem to be Infidel nor Enthuſiaſt, neither diſparage the Power of Religion by meanneſs of Spirit, nor render it ſuſpected to be merely the acting of a part by my over-doing and pretending to too high flights of Joy.

Sebaſt. This ſecond inquiry of yours, *Philander*, is no leſs uſeful than the former, for (as you have well intimated) not only the happineſs of a Man's own Life depends upon it, but the Reputation of Religion it ſelf is very much concerned in the temper of Spirit, which he expreſſes under it. For what ſtranger to Religion would not be afraid of it, that obſerves the melancholy Complaints, the perpetual Scruples, the doleful Sighs and diſmal Countenances of ſome that pretend to it? And on the other hand; What ſober Man would not take it to be an Enthuſiaſtick Frenzy, when he obſerves Men to be rapt up into the third Heaven (at leaſt in their own conceit) but can give no rational account of it? And again; what wiſe Man ſhall obſerve the uncertainty of Mens temper in this reſpect, and not ſuſpect whether that can have any ſolid Foundation it ſelf whoſe Effects are ſo volatile and inconſtant?

This being the conſequence of the caſe, it is very fit it ſhould be provided for accordingly. Now though what I have ſaid already whilſt I was anſwering *Biophilus*'s Objections againſt the com-

comfortableneſs of Religion, will in a good meaſure come up to this point, eſpecially if you lay all thoſe things together which were occaſionally ſcattered through that diſpute; yet for your ſatisfaction, as well as for the importance of the matter, I will not grudge the pains to reſume that ſubject, and give you my thoughts more fully and directly now, which before I did only briefly and by the bye.

Now in order to the determining of the method and means of ſettled peace and an even temper of Spiritual Comfort, it is neceſſary that we diſcover the ſeveral cauſes of the Interpretation thereof, and when we have found them, if we can apply proper and peculiar Remedies to each of them, then we ſhall do your buſineſs.

As for the former, *viz.* the cauſes of the Unevenneſs of a Chriſtian's Spirit, or the Interruptions of his Spiritual Comfort, they are eaſily found out, and I do not doubt but they may be reckoned to be theſe five following:

Namely, either, 1. Unevenneſs and Irregularity of Life. Or,

2. Undue Apprehenſions of God. Or,

3. Miſtake of the terms of the Goſpel. Or,

4. Sad Accidents externally. Or,

5. Melancholy of Body.

1. In the firſt place, I account the Irregularity of Mens Lives to be a very common *A conſtant and even courſe of*

Piety is the first and principal means of a constant and even temper of heart.

mon and the most ordinary cause of the Unevenness of their Comfort.

All vertuous Actions have naturally Peace and Tranquillity belonging to them; for, besides the pleasant Air of good Reputation that attends them, and that a Man who hath the least value for applause that can be, is, notwithstanding, insensibly made more chearful by it, it is a great deal more to have a Man's own Conscience approve him, and especially when he considers that he doth what God is well pleased with, and that which he will not fail one way or other to give Testimony to, and shew his Approbation of.

On the contrary, all vicious Actions are naturally uncomfortable; for, besides the infamy that attends them, they have guilt inseparably adheres to them; and God's displeasure intailed upon them. For as he can never either hate Vertue or love Vice without a flat Contradiction to his own Nature, so neither can he, or will he frown upon the one, or shine upon the other.

Now therefore if a Man be habitually vicious, he must needs be habitually sad and miserable (without that more miserable and sordid Refuge, Drunkenness, that filthy Dose for the Gripes of Conscience.) And if a Man be habitually Good and Holy, and maintains a constant course of Piety and Vertuous Actions, he will be habitually comfortable,

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and under a conſtant ray of light and glory. But if a Man be up and down in his life, ſometimes good, and ſometimes bad, or at leaſt ſometimes brave and generous, and at other times flat and careleſs, he cannot expect that his comforts ſhould be more conſtant than he himſelf is: for the effects muſt follow the condition of their cauſes.

In this caſe therefore the Diſeaſe leads to the Remedy, he that would maintain an even temper of Peace in his Conſcience, muſt be ſure to maintain an even courſe of Vertue and Piety in his Life. For it is not only impoſſible to ſecure the former without the latter, but it is ridiculous to pretend to it; nay farther, if it ſhould happen that any Man found his Heart chearful extraordinarily upon other terms, he would have juſt cauſe to ſuſpect a deluſion of the Devil.

God is conſtantly of the ſame Mind, Religion and the terms of happineſs are conſtant and ſettled, therefore there can be no way to conſtant Comfort in the one, or Hopes in the other, but by being conſtant to our ſelves and to our duty; nor can there be any cauſe of uncertainty, but the unſettledneſs of our own Hearts. But if a Man live ſo, as that it become matter of difficult diſpute, whether he be a good Man or no, it muſt needs be much more ſo, whether he ſhall go to Heaven or no, and then I think it is out of diſpute, whether ſuch

a Man can be comfortable or not. Let the Man therefore that aims at a ſettled Peace, be ſure to be conſtant and thorough paced in his duty, that it become not only a biaſs upon him, but the very method and habit of his Life; and let fooliſh People, if they will, call this formality and a road of Religion, for if it be a road, it is certainly the narrow one that leads to life; for never is Religion as it ſhould be, till it become thus natural and habitual. Yet leſt any Man ſhould by reaſon of the eaſineſs of this ſtate, when it is arrived at, interpret it to be but formality, let him withal embrace all opportunities of doing not only ſtrictly neceſſary duties, but brave and generous actions, that ſo he may demonſtrate zeal as well as conſtancy, and an ardency of affection to God and Goodneſs; and he that takes this courſe, ſhall effectually ſecure himſelf againſt the firſt cauſe of uncomfortableneſs.

Right Notions of God is the next ſtep to ſettled Peace.

2. The ſecond cauſe of ſpiritual dejection I reckoned to be undue apprehenſions of God, and this generally goes a great way in the diſquiets and diſorders of moſt well-meaning but weak People; for whereas, if things be rightly conſidered, the very firſt Notion of a God is an everlaſting ſpring of hope, and the right underſtanding of his Goodneſs is the great ſweetner of a Man's Spirits, and that which principally diſpoſes him to chearfulneſs; it is common with weak or deluded

deluded People either to receive ſuch Impreſſions from others, or ignorantly to frame ſuch an Image of God in their own Minds as they muſt eternally hate, but cannot poſſibly love. And if the Thoughts of God be unpleaſant to them, it muſt needs follow that all the duties of Religion muſt go on heavily, and when they have done, their hopes muſt be flat, and all about them looks melancholy.

The principal thing I aim at in this place, is when Men have ſuch a Notion of God as renders his Actions as neceſſary as his Nature; and becauſe (as I have ſhewed to *Biophilus*) he was from Eternity, and could not but be, therefore they conceit he cannot but do whatſoever is done as neceſſarily as he exiſts, and ſo unawares they ſet a ſurly and rigid Fate over themſelves inſtead of a wiſe and good God. For in purſuance of this Notion they conclude he muſt be juſt to extremity, and that he is bound to vindicate himſelf rigorouſly, ſo that he cannot abate or remit of his own right, but muſt exact the utmoſt Farthing; and on the other ſide, they fancy that he cannot but do all the good he doth, and muſt upon neceſſity of nature make all the Expreſſions of kindneſs that are poſſible.

The former of theſe is very horrible; for (though in one reſpect it renders God leſs than a Man, for we both can

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(and ought in many caſes to) recede from our own right, yet upon the whole) it muſt needs be an hard Chapter, nay, a moſt killing Conſideration to ſuch imperfect and guilty Creatures as we are, to think our ſelves under a God that cannot pardon properly, that can paſs no Act of Grace, but muſt rigidly exact his Right one way or other: for then what can my Prayers, and Tears, and Repentance, and even Reformation it ſelf ſignifie? And though there be a Mediator and a Satisfaction ſpoken of in the Goſpel, yet the apprehenſion of ſuch a ſupreme Being is able to render even that Remedy ſuſpicious, or however to make a Man's Heart ake and tremble all the days of his Life; but to be ſure he can take no delight in God, whatever hopes he may have in a Saviour.

And then, on the other ſide, the apprehenſion of the neceſſity of the Acts of Divine Goodneſs renders him as contemptible as the former made him terrible. For who can think himſelf bound to love and thank him for that which he could not chuſe but do? And beſides, this renders all Prayers and Addreſſes to ſuch a God as fruitleſs as the other. For what need I pray to him that cannot do otherwiſe than he doth?

But the miſtake all this while lies here; neither of theſe ſorts of Men conſider that God is a free Agent, and conſequent-

ſequently (though he cannot chuſe but be juſt and righteous in all his dealings, yet) he is bound by nothing but his own good pleaſure to exerciſe ſuch, or ſuch inſtances of Juſtice. He may puniſh, or he may pardon upon what terms he pleaſes, and ſo far as he pleaſes; *He hath Mercy becauſe he will have Mercy, and becauſe Mercy pleaſes him:* And ſo for his Goodneſs, though he is infinitely full and perfect, and conſequently delights to communicate himſelf to his Creatures, yet all the Inſtances and Expreſſions of it are free and voluntary; he is not bound to do ſuch things merely becauſe they are good in the general, but accordingly as his own Wiſdom directs him, and as they ſhall ſerve the Ends of that in particular. And then every good Man that lives under theſe Apprehenſions may be generouſly comfortable, and neither be tempted to deſpiſe God as a ſoft and good-natured Being, on the one ſide, nor to be horribly afraid of him, and hate him, on the other.

Right apprehenſion of the temper and demand of the Goſpel is another means of ſettled peace.

3. Another cauſe of Uncomfortableneſs is, when Men do not rightly underſtand the terms of the Goſpel, but either miſtake the Opinions and Traditions of Men for the Definitions of God, or at leaſt confound what God deſigns to bring us up to by the Goſpel as a State of Perfection, with what he ſtrictly requires and inſiſts upon as the Conditi-

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ons of Salvation. Hence it comes to paſs that they are not able to make any good Judgment of their own Eſtate, but are either apt to comply with the flatteries of their own Hearts, and pronounce comfort to themſelves upon too looſe terms; or on the other ſide, to yield to their own Melancholy by too ſevere and rigid a Cenſure of themſelves; or laſtly, will waver between both, according as they meet with a New Book, a New Saying, or an unuſual Accident, and ſo be by fits ſad or chearfull, as it happens.

Now for this, it is to be conſidered, that though the Goſpel ſometimes ſeems to be very ſtrict and ſevere, or at leaſt very accurate in its Preſcriptions, which it doth, partly for the Honour and Perfection of that Religion, partly by that means to ſcrew us up to as high a Pitch as poſſible: For it is certain if our Copy or Rule ſhould be low and mean, our endeavours would be ſlakned, and our performances would fall ſo very ſhort that we ſhould not be tolerable Chriſtians: Again, on the other ſide, though the ſame Goſpel at other times ſpeaks very condeſcendingly and ſeems to make ſo great allowances to human Infirmity, as if it was a very eaſie matter to be ſaved; and this it doth to incourage eſpecially men of melancholy and dejected Tempers, and to bear them up againſt the ſad Reflections they

they are apt to make either upon their former Sins, or their daily Infirmities.

Yet all this while God is of one Mind, and the New Teſtament hath a determinate Senſe:

Namely, That whatſoever ſhall give evidence of a Man's Sincerity, *i. e.* that he hath a Principle of Divine Life in him, and a true Love of God and Goodneſs, this ſhall be ſufficient to his Salvation; and as nothing leſs than this ſhall be accepted, ſo nothing more is indiſpenſably required.

For the Salvation or Damnation of Men depends not upon Punctilio's or nice Points of Diſpute, as if God had a Mind by the means of a ſubtil Interpretation, to ſave and damn Men arbitrarily, therefore he lays no ſtreſs upon their being, or not being, of ſuch an Opinion, nor takes the advantage of a Ceremony under or over; for the Apoſtle hath told us, *That the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; and again, *That neither Circumciſion availeth any thing nor Uncircumciſion, but a New Creature.* Rom. 14. 17. Gal. 6. 15.

Nay, it is true alſo that God decides not Mens final Eſtate (one way or other) merely upon the account of ſuch Duties performed, or ſuch Sins committed: but that which he principally looks at in this caſe is an ingenuous or diſingenuous temper towards himſelf, and a capacity

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or fitneſs for the ſtate of Heaven on the one ſide, and a temper and diſpoſition fit for Hell and the Devil on the other.

That (I ſay) which God expreſly requires as the Condition of Salvation, is an habit and temper of Obedience, and an ingenuous frame of Heart towards himſelf and his Laws. And that this is not to be eſtimated Arithmetically, or by tale of ſuch a number of Performances, but rather Geometrically, in proportion to the heartineſs and ſincerity of the Man, and with reſpect to the circumſtances he ſtands in; that is, as well making allowance for his temptations, afflictions, ignorances, infirmities and ſurpriſals, as raiſing the reckoning in conſideration of extraordinary light, knowledge, opportunities, incouragements and advantages whatſoever. Accordingly we find the Apoſtle
1 Cor. 13. 3. to make a ſuppoſition, that a Man *may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burnt alſo, and yet want charity* and the love of God; and yet our Saviour on the other hand tells us
Matt. 10. 42. that, *whoſoever ſhall give a cup of cold water only to a Diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward.*

So that (as I ſaid) ſincerity is the only thing in queſtion, eſpecially as to the buſineſs of a conſtant and even temper of Spiritual Peace. Now that is eaſie to be decided, and a Man needs not to run himſelf into nice Diſputes, endleſs Scruples

ples and perplexities about it; for whoſoever endeavours to live well according to the Goſpel, will eaſily be ſenſible of his own ſincerity. For as it is no hard matter for a Man to know concerning himſelf, whether he hath carried himſelf faithfully towards his Friend, or with a filial reverence towards his Father, and he may as eaſily tell whether he hath dealt treacherouſly with the one, or been ſtubborn, and careleſs of offending the other; and accordingly (if they be wiſe and worthy Perſons he hath to deal with) he may aſſure himſelf of the love of the former and of the paternal affection of the latter, notwithſtanding that poſſibly he may be conſcious to himſelf to have done ſome things unadviſedly, and to have failed in circumſtances towards them both: So I ſee no reaſon to doubt but that upon the ſame terms a Man may be able to witneſs to himſelf his own integrity and ſimplicity towards God his trueſt Friend and moſt affectionate Father, and thereupon look chearfully up to him as ſuch, and walk comfortably before him, eſpecially having ſo good aſſurance (as I ſhew'd before) that he is far from being a captious Deity.

Faith in God againſt all accidents and outward Affections

4. Again, there is a fourth very common occaſion of uncomfortableneſs, namely, the grievance of external Accidents and Calamities, which may and do frequently befal the beſt Men, and which either

another means of constant Peace and Comfort.

either by their ſharpneſs diſcompoſe a Chriſtian, or by the multitude and ſeverity of them may tempt him to queſtion how he ſtands in the favour of God who permits ſuch things to befal him, or at leaſt by their often and yet uncertain Returns may make the Pulſe of his Heart beat very unequally.

Againſt this there is no more proper Remedy than to rouze up our ſelves, and to act a generous Faith in God.

Conſidering, in the firſt place, that this is his uſual method with thoſe he loves beſt, to exerciſe them with Affliction, and that Affliction is ſo far from being a Token of his Hatred, that on the contrary, there is no more dangerous ſign of God's having quite deſerted and abandoned a Man, than for him to uſe no Chaſtiſement towards him. *If ye receive not chaſtiſement*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ye are Baſtards, and not Sons.* And therefore we ſee the very Eternal Son of God when he came upon Earth and was in our Nature, was the moſt remarkable Inſtance of a *Man of Sorrows* that ever was in the World, inſomuch that it is not eaſie to imagine what calamity can befal any Man which is not to be parallelled, if not exceeded in the Sufferings of our Saviour, and as if God had ordered it ſo on purpoſe to this end, that no Man might complain of his ſhare, or eſpecially deſpair and think himſelf forſaken of God becauſe of his Adverſities.

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And then in the ſecond place, aſſuring our ſelves that as all afflictions come from God, ſo they ſhall *certainly be made to work for good to all thoſe that love him.* For unleſs we humour our ſelves, and indulge our Paſſion too much, we may diſcover that there is hardly any affliction befals, but what we may be bettered by, even for the preſent if we will; but there can be no doubt but God both can and will turn it to our advantage in the iſſue and upſhot of things: and therefore we have no reaſon to be too much dejected upon ſuch an occaſion. Rom. 8. 28.

But that which is to be the principal exerciſe of our Faith in ſuch a caſe, and of moſt effectual conſideration, is, That God hath provided another World, and a ſtate of unmixed and uninterrupted joy there, when this ſhort and troubleſome life is ended. And if we fix our thoughts there (which we have great reaſon to do, conſidering the happineſs is ſo unſpeakably great, the certainty of it ſo full, and the time ſo ſhort for the accompliſhment of it) we ſhall then count *all the ſufferings of the preſent not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall then be revealed*, and be far from fainting under the ſharpeſt of adverſities, *whilſt thus we look not at the things which are ſeen, and are but temporal, but at the things which are not ſeen, and are eternal.* Rom. 8. 18. 2 Cor. 4. 18.

5. But fifthly and laſtly, the moſt general cauſe of the uncomfortableneſs of *Advice in the caſe of bodily melancholy.*

the Spirits of pious Men, and of the unevenneſs of their temper, is bodily melancholy; that black humour is apt to diffuſe it ſelf all over, ſo as to cloud the judgment, and taint the eye of the mind, that every thing ſhall look of its own colour, black and diſmal, when this predominates, and at leaſt while the Fit laſts, God is dreadful, his Laws are impoſſible, the guilt of ſin is unpardonable, and even the moſt pitiable infirmities of Mankind (eſpecially thoſe which ſuch a Man can obſerve in himſelf) are aggravated ſo as to bear the ſymptoms of Reprobation, and every affliction is looked upon as a forerunner of the Vengeance of Hell Fire.

Melancholy in the Body becomes Jealouſie in the Mind, and renders a Man always ſuſpicious and uneaſie, and to be continually ſearching for what he would be loth to find; he is always trying and examining his own caſe to God-ward with that ſeverity, as if he was deſirous to diſcover flaws in his hopes and evidences of Salvation; one while he is a little revived, and ſees no reaſon to doubt his own Eſtate, but by and by he revokes the moſt deliberate concluſions of his own Conſcience, and then again falls into the other extreme, and is altogether in the altitudes, but always uneven and unſettled.

Now for remedy of this, it is more than half way of the cure to underſtand the Diſeaſe, and yet that is no more than

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to be aware that melancholy is both cauſe and effect, and that that alone is able to act all this Tragedy without any other cauſe of ſadneſs and diſquiet, than merely the diffidence and miſtruſt of a Man's own temper. And that betrays it ſelf notoriouſly in this, that ſuch a Man can aſſign no reaſon of his trouble, but only he is troubled, and he is again troubled that he is ſo. Now if a Man could give any ſuch account of his uncomfortable fears as were ſufficient to ſatisfie any Man beſides himſelf, then it would be reaſonable not to charge them upon melancholy, but upon thoſe juſt cauſes; but if no ſuch cauſes be aſſignable, then it is manifeſtly temper that is in fault without guilt or danger; and this one thing conſidered is able to relieve a Man out of his perplexity, and his Mind may arrive at ſome tolerable meaſure of chearfulneſs, even in the midſt of this bodily infirmity.

But if the underſtanding of ſuch a Man be too weak, or the Diſeaſe of melancholy be too ſtrong upon him to be cured this way; then the next thing to be done (after the uſe of Phyſick for the body) is to reſort to ſome able and experienced Phyſician of Souls, and ſincerely to lay open the ſtate of his Conſcience to him: and having ſo done, to reſt upon the judgment of that other perſon, ſeeing he is not able to judge for himſelf, or not willing to rely upon his own judgment. And this is not only a way

of preſent relief, but very ſafe and reaſonable, and can have no ſuch thing as an implicite faith imputed to it. For ſo long as the perplexed perſon can give any reaſon of his doubts and fears, ſo long the ſpiritual Guide is bound to give ſatisfaction to his reaſon, and to anſwer the juſt cauſes of his trouble; but when that is done, and the poor Man is perplexed without cauſe, it is apparent there is nothing but melancholy in the caſe, and then nothing can be more fit and proper than that the weak ſhould lean upon the ſtrong, and this poor diſtreſſed Creature ſhould ſupport himſelf by the authority of God's Miniſter, who muſt be ſuppoſed to be able to judge in ſuch a caſe, and cannot be ſuſpected to be partial, becauſe he hath no intereſt to ſerve by ſo doing.

And farther, the more effectually to relieve ſuch a pitiable Perſon, it ſeems very neceſſary that after due Preparation thereunto, and all fit ſolemnity, the Man of God ſhould proceed to a particular Abſolution of his Patient, not only to aſſure him of the good grounds he went upon in the judgment he gave of his eſtate before, but to raiſe his Spirits by the ſacredneſs of the Action, and the hopes that God will ratifie in Heaven what is thus done on Earth by his Miniſter. This courſe is recommended by our Church as a *ſpecifick* in ſuch caſes, and was of conſtant practice in the Primitive Church in ſuch extremities, inſtead of that

that cuſtomary, general, and formal Auricular Confeſſion, which (in ignorant and corrupt ages) came in the room of it.

After all, I would earneſtly adviſe ſuch a Man (as we ſpeak of) not to ſmother his thoughts in his own boſome, but by all means to let his Heart take Air: for there is hardly any ſerious Perſon ſo weak and injudicious, that a melancholy Man had not better conſult with than himſelf; nay, many times the putting a queſtion to a Poſt or Pillar, will help him to an anſwer better than revolving of it altogether in his own Breaſt; but eſpecially it is to be recommended to him, that he give not himſelf up to ſolitude and retirement, which thickens the Blood, and feeds the Diſeaſe, but that he frequent the company and Converſation of good Men; their ſociety will not only divert him, but their chearfulneſs will refreſh him, and the very obſerving of their infirmities will tend to his comfort, as giving him cauſe to ſuſpect his own auſterity, and ſo inclining him to paſs a more mild cenſure upon himſelf.

And thus, I think, *Philander*, I have ſatisfied your ſecond inquiry, and have done it more largely than I intended, or than you expected. And now, once again, good night.

Phil. Good night heartily, good *Sebaſtian.*

F I N I S.

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